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Buckley, E. A.

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How to write better business letters

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McGRAW-HILL PRACTICAL BUSINESS MANUALS

How to Write
Better Business Letters

McGRAW-HILL PRACTICAL BUSINESS MANUALS

Buckley—HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

Buckley—HOW TO SELL BY MAIL

Chaffee—HOW TO FILE BUSINESS PAPERS AND RECORDS

Howard—HOW TO WRITE ADVERTISEMENTS

Howard—METHODS OF SALES PROMOTION

Kniffin—HOW TO USE YOUR BANK

Tamlin—HOW TO MAKE COLLECTIONS

Wright—HOW TO GET PUBLICITY

How to Write

BETTER BUSINESS
LETTERS

A PRACTICAL, STEP-BY-STEP DISCUSSION
OF THE PRINCIPLES INVOLVED AND THE
PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED IN THE
PREPARATION AND THE DICTATION OF
SUCCESSFUL LETTERS

BY
EARLE A. BUCKLEY
*Advertising Counselor; Direct Mail Specialist; Correspondence
Supervisor; Letter Expert of nineteen years
active experience*

SECOND EDITION
EIGHTH IMPRESSION

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1940

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PREFACE

In writing this introduction to the second edition of my first book, let me steal a paragraph from the preface of a book written by another.

Joseph Conrad, Polish-born English novelist, in the year, peculiarly enough, that I made my appearance on this earth, wrote:

“My task, which I am trying to achieve, is by the power of the written word, to make you *hear*, to make you *feel*—it is, before all, to make you *see*.”

That is *your* task, too, whenever you write a letter—to make your reader *see* your product or proposition so vividly that he will be receptive to any reasonable *action* you propose.

The reading of this book will, I hope, make that task easier. If it does nothing else, it will certainly make you letter conscious and that in itself is worth while.

Letter writing today is a profession, an art. Don't take it too much for granted. Don't just dash off a so-called *sales* letter and send it out, hoping it will do an effective job—or hurriedly and thoughtlessly dictate a routine business letter, satisfied if it just answers another.

There's *power* in a good letter and not to take advantage of it is an economic waste. Remember that by their very customs and traditions people are vitally interested in letters. Of all the different

PREFACE

kinds of mail received, they are invariably opened *first*, and that's true whether the address on the envelope is handwritten or typewritten.

So your letter has a decided advantage to begin with. It is almost certain to be opened and—shall we say—*scanned*? Whether it is *read*, *assimilated* and *acted upon* depends to a large extent on the way you have put your thoughts together, on the *construction* of your message.

If you want to write better letters—friendlier, more convincing, more resultful—I believe the careful reading of this book will help you. It wasn't prepared for the professional letter writer, but rather for the many thousands of men and women who perhaps write good letters now, but who could write *outstanding* letters with a little of the right kind of study and application.

If I have done a good job, you should be able to apply immediately the information this book contains to your own individual problems.

I hope sincerely that you can and that in a short while every one of the letters you turn out will be a *sales letter* in every sense of the term, regardless of its primary purpose.

EARLE A. BUCKLEY.

PHILADELPHIA, PA.,
April, 1940.

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HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

Chapter I

ANALYSIS

Analyzing the Product, Service or Idea

The Product

Before we do anything else — let's see what we have to sell.

Let's haul it out into plain view, take it apart and find out something about it. If it's a product, let's study it awhile to determine the features that will enable us to discuss it intelligently. What interests us most, I think, is the excuse it has for existence. What is it? What does it look like? What does it do? How is it used? Why is it better?

Let's be curious about it and ask all the questions we can think of, even at the risk of getting ourselves classed as infernal nuisances. The thing to remember is that the more we know about it, the more easily, more interestingly and more convincingly we can talk about it in a letter.

We should be able to assume that the product itself will bear close inspection; that it is *right* from a mechanical, chemical or engineering standpoint; that it actually *will* do the work claimed for it; that its price is economically correct; that it is packaged, labeled and merchandised in a way

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calculated to produce the most satisfactory results. It is not the purpose of this book to delve into the intricate problems of real product analysis, but I do want to emphasize the necessity for knowing intimately the full story concerning whatever it is you intend to write about.

The Service

Much the same applies if the letter is about an intangible, a service of some kind. Take *it* apart just as you would a product. See what there is about it that would make *you* want to subscribe to it or want it, if you were on the other side of the fence! What does it accomplish that similar services don't or can't? In analyzing it, try very hard to be unbiased. Look at it as far as possible from the other fellow's viewpoint. After all, a service isn't worth a hoot unless it *brings* something, *gives* something or *does* something worth while for the chap who buys it. Elementary? Of course it is, but a point very often forgotten in the routine carrying on of a business.

The Idea

It may not be a product or service that you have to sell. It may be an *idea*. You may want to sell someone on the idea of lending you \$50, or giving you a job, or sending you some money that is owed you, or being a pleased customer again after he's told you in no uncertain terms what an unfair and unreasonable "louse" you really are.

ANALYSIS

Whatever the idea, you have something definite to sell that you can analyze and take apart just like a product or service. This "taking apart" is a tremendously important requirement in successful letter writing. You can't write a good letter without it, any more than you can drive an automobile without looking where you're going.

Analyzing the Prospect or Customer

We are still "taking apart," but this time it's the person to whom the letter is going. Before writing, it is quite necessary that we know something about the fellow (male or female) at the "other end of the wire."

You wouldn't write to a man in the same way you'd write to a woman, in most cases at least. You certainly wouldn't talk the same "language" to a business executive as to a jobber's salesman. People in different occupations or different stations in life or even different parts of the country often require entirely different kinds of approach.

"To what kind of people am I writing?" is therefore an important question, and a careful analysis in this direction will invariably pay big dividends. When you're just writing to one person — and it's an important letter — it is always good policy, if you can do it, to learn something about him before you start to draft the letter. It may be that you'll want to open up with some reference to a hobby of his, or mention some incident with which you know he is familiar, or avoid some idiosyncrasy.

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I know one man, for instance, who is literally a fanatic on the subject of English construction. He likes to take words apart and study them for weeks at a time, trying to find their true meanings. Using colloquialisms or words with a double meaning in writing to that man is like waving a red flag in front of a bull.

If it is a sales letter to a group, and you can classify your prospects in any way, as farmers, dealers, professional men, engineers, architects, etc., it is usually quite easy to learn something about them as a group beforehand.

When you have exhausted the possibilities in this direction, the next step is an analysis of the prospect's (or customer's) probable mental attitude. Will he welcome what you are going to say? Will he be glad to hear from you and willing to read everything you send him — or indifferent to any proposition you might make? Will he be open-minded or prejudiced? In order to get action, will you have to change completely some accepted opinion or will his views on the general subject be pretty much in accord with yours? The successful letter writer, if he can't find out for sure, will *sense* the answers to these questions — and be right in a large percentage of cases. The very fact that you've *thought* about them will clear the atmosphere and enable you to write a better letter.

Analyzing the Proposition

There's still some more analyzing to be done before you start to write, so don't be impatient.

ANALYSIS

You've taken apart the product, service or idea, whatever it is you have to sell. And you've thought hard about the person to whom your letter is going. Now, to complete the job, let's dissect the *proposition*.

Let's say we have an eight-year-old La Salle. That's the product. An analysis would bring out the few remaining good features of the car and give us our line-up of sales arguments. An analysis of the "sucker" list to be used would tell us something about our prospects. Understand, the car is a good "buy" at a certain price. It still looks all right and it still runs. But if we attempt in the letter to sell it for \$300, when the published book value is only \$85, then we haven't got a good proposition.

If you're a manufacturer and your price is such that jobbers and dealers can't sell as many of your products or make as much on them as they can with a competitive line, then *you* haven't a good proposition.

Analyze your proposition, whatever it is, before you attempt to exploit it in a letter. Decide whether or not you, in the other fellow's place, would consider it a good "deal." If not, don't write the letter at all. Work on the proposition and make it attractive enough to justify writing a letter about.

If it *is* a good deal, go to it and sell it for all you're worth.

Chapter II

THE FORMULA FOR SALES LETTERS

A LETTER formula is as necessary to sales-letter writing as a recipe is to cake baking. It is something to be learned by heart and followed systematically until it becomes automatic — much the same as the motions used in driving an automobile. The experienced driver isn't conscious of pushing out his left foot every time he changes gears. Neither is the seasoned letter writer conscious of adhering to a letter formula. If his training has been along right lines, he just does it automatically. The formula for writing a sales letter is *interest, desire, conviction* and *action*. And you can't write a good sales letter without these elements. You must arouse interest, or the reader won't even finish the letter. You must create a desire for whatever you're selling, or obviously you can't hope ultimately to consummate a sale. You must make your reasons for buying convincing, or the prospect won't feel that it is to his advantage to buy. And you must lead him into some kind of action, otherwise his enthusiasm will cool off before you have a chance to "cash in."

This following of a formula in writing sales letters is fundamental. Elementary as it may sound, you can't dispense with it, any more than you can in personal selling.

THE FORMULA FOR SALES LETTERS

When you call on a man to interest him in some labor-saving device, for instance, you don't open up by asking him to buy. You tell him something about it that will immediately arouse his interest or curiosity. Then you tell him something about it that will create a desire for it, such as the amount of money he can save every year through its use. Then you bring forth proof to show him that your product will do what you claim for it. And finally you attempt to close the sale.

The procedure is precisely the same in writing an advertisement. Authorities agree that an ad, to be effective, must be seen, read, believed and acted upon. The first requirement, that it be "seen," obviously doesn't apply to letters, but the other three are equally essential in writing a sales letter. The ad won't be read, believed and acted upon unless it *does* arouse interest, create desire, inspire conviction and take the steps necessary to bring about a favorable decision. Students of letter writing should, therefore, commit this formula to memory and use it to check and double check every sales letter they write. There isn't a safer measuring stick available to them.

Chapter III

WRITING THE OPENING

ITEM one in the sales-letter formula, as you of course know because by now you have carefully memorized it, is *interest*.

Creating interest in the opening paragraph of a letter is as vital as getting off to a good start in a public speech. The opening of a letter is really more important than the start of a speech because the chap reading the letter can, and frequently does, throw the letter away if his interest isn't aroused, whereas those listening to a speaker are usually "stuck" until the end, whether he's good, bad or indifferent. Hence, in beginning a letter, ask yourself, "What can I lead off with, that will make the recipient want to hear more?"

* * *

Right here, let's differentiate between attention and interest. Attracting attention and arousing interest are two entirely different things. Some opening paragraphs attract attention but they don't arouse interest. On the other hand, if you scare up some interest, you needn't worry about attention. You'll have it. To cite an exaggerated case, starting a letter with "How's your Aunt Minnie?" will no doubt attract attention and lead the reader on, through curiosity, to the next

WRITING THE OPENING

paragraph, but it certainly won't create interest that can be sustained by the proposition.

Here are some openings that do:

How would you like to cut down your expenses?

That was the start of a letter used by a manufacturer of gold leaf to interest sign men in the use of his particular leaf. The letter went on to show the reader how he could save both time and money.

* * *

Would you wash and iron a shirt for a nickel?

This was used by a laundry for a selected list of women prospects. The second paragraph completed the thought. It read:

We will . . . for less than that!

The rest of the letter went on to state the proposition.

* * *

If you'd like to banish forever the bugaboo of OVERAGE and SHORTAGE in making change for your customers, then read carefully the enclosed folder.

This opening paragraph served a double purpose. It not only aroused interest, but it gave the prospect a good reason for reading the accompanying literature which, in pictures and color, told the complete story.

The second paragraph continued selling the idea of reading the folder:

Here's a guaranteed change-maker at a third to a half the price of other machines, yet it's faster, simpler, easier to

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

operate and more accurate. The folder will give you some very interesting facts.

* * *

I have good news for you!

The word "news" is always intriguing. Certainly anyone who read this opening would go on, to find out what the "good news" was.

The interest is strengthened by the second short paragraph:

Your winter overcoat, at half the price you'd expect to pay for it, is all ready for you to wear.

* * *

Notice how the following openings awaken interest and lead the reader on to find out more:

Here's something that looks as if it would be the most successful idea we have ever used to get leads for new business.

* * *

You can't afford to overlook the possibilities for increased profit provided by our "extra rich Porter during the cold winter season!"

* * *

An important two-way advertising campaign that will do more to increase your sales and profits than anything that's happened in a long long while, has just started.

* * *

If you are looking for a means to reduce the cost of fuel oil deliveries, and thereby increase your profits, the enclosed circular on "Newtype" Synplastic Fuel Oil Hose will interest you.

* * *

WRITING THE OPENING

It took us almost seventy-five years to create a sensation such as this. It will take you but a minute to realize that the enclosed book will mean a bigger Christmas sales volume than you've ever had before!

* * *

On reliable authority, we have learned that wholesale coal prices will advance next Fall. Disquieting news — but there is a way to beat the rising market if you act now!

* * *

The much-to-be-desired waiting list is getting nearer and nearer every day!

* * *

If this idea can help you sell one house — it would be worth looking into. The fact that it has helped others to sell many houses would indicate that you too might use it to advantage.

* * *

This letter is in answer to the man who, one stifling hot day last July said, "I'd give my eye teeth for a suit of clothes that would enable me to laugh at summer."

* * *

If you're interested in a saving on better mats, you'll be interested in using the new, improved Wescomat, made by a unique high-fidelity process, on your very next order.

* * *

The enclosed announcement, while designed primarily for insurance agents, might also prove extremely interesting to *you*.

* * *

For two very good reasons, I am reminding you that a longer period than is considered safe, has passed since we last examined your eyes.

* * *

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

Here's good news — a smaller, lighter, better hearing aid for about 50% less than the price of any comparable instrument.

* * *

Wouldn't you be interested in a larger share of good health than you've been enjoying recently?

* * *

How would you like to have new, air conditioned refrigeration for the beer you sell — at low cost?

* * *

Would you mind a personal question? The answer is really none of our business but is extremely important to you.

* * *

Why not, this year, send out a completely *different* Christmas greeting?

* * *

Do you have a copy of Cushing's Manual of Parliamentary Practice? If not, may we send you, entirely free, a copy of the latest edition?

* * *

Here's the biggest *something for nothing* you've ever received — and we solemnly promise that there are no strings attached.

* * *

You and I are in the same boat — we're both looking for new business — and because we have a common objective, perhaps this proposal will interest you.

* * *

The right opening must be based on personal interest. You can be reasonably sure that the first paragraph of your letter will be read in any event, but the second and third and the rest of the letter

WRITING THE OPENING

will be read *only* if you ring the bell with your opening gun.

There are various kinds of ammunition available to you . . . the gain appeal, loss appeal, bargain appeal, sex appeal, pride appeal, emotional appeal and others. Those which are directed toward the natural desire for gain and those which have a tendency to stimulate the emotions have generally proved to be the most effective. It has been my experience, however, that each problem stands pretty much by itself. The appeal to use in your opening is one that you feel will make the prospect anxious to read on, one that will arouse the kind of interest you can sustain in the following paragraphs.

The opening is your opportunity to guide the thoughts of your prospect into the proper channels. It is the way paver for your proposition, the advance guard that makes receptive the mind of your reader.

Chapter IV

WRITING THE BODY

FIRST let's review the letter formula: Interest — Desire — Conviction — Action.

The first of these we take care of in the opening paragraph. The next two belong in the body of the letter and the fourth in the close.

The second paragraph, therefore, is usually a continuation of the thought expressed in the first and the start of an attempt to create desire. Here we want to show the prospect what the product or service will do for him, rather than enter into a discussion of what the product is and how it works. Many sales letters make this mistake of assuming that the real story lies in a description of the product. It doesn't; the only thing the prospect is interested in is *what the product will do for him*. Never forget that, because it is extremely important.

Let's take an example. The first paragraph of a letter to Operative Builders reads as follows:

Here's information about a new type of solid block for party walls — one with a number of important advantages to you as a builder.

Notice how the suggestion of advantages to be gained arouses interest and leads you on to the next paragraph:

WRITING THE BODY

It is a shrinkless cinder block 6" high, 8" wide and 18" long. The usual size, as you know, is $8 \times 8 \times 16$.

After telling what it is, we create desire by featuring the benefits in its use.

One very interesting point about this new size, from your standpoint, is that it costs *less per cubic foot in the wall*, because being lighter and handier, it is cheaper and easier to lay. Can be laid faster, too.

People are interested, not in the product, but what the product will do for them. Notice how in the next paragraphs we build conviction by continuing the outline of benefits to be derived:

But it's not only a cheaper block to use, it's distinctly a better block as well.

Your men can lay a straighter wall with it, for due to its size and shape there is much less tendency to slip.

Your men will also be laying a stronger wall, for this is a high pressure, steam cured block, completely pre-shrunk by an exclusive process that makes the finished product 15 to 20% lighter, yet at the same time considerably stronger.

Summed up — here's the story — A block guaranteed to be better, safer, less expensive to use — at the same proportionate cost per cubic foot as you're paying for the ordinary air cured block. And we can assure you of fast, dependable service.

In this and in the next few letter examples, closing paragraphs have been left out entirely. They will be discussed under "the close."

Here's a case where we are selling not a product, but an idea — the idea that good music develops character and that to have good music you should have a good piano.

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

Wouldn't you like to know what kind of an adult your child will grow up to be?

It's hard to tell, when they are young, just what life has in store — and for that reason it is difficult to train them along lines leading to a definite goal.

We do know, however, that success depends largely upon character — and character can certainly be developed right from the cradle!

One important way of teaching character is by encouraging good habits. Opening the child's eyes to the beauties in life is another.

And heading the list of things that are beautiful is music. It reaches the soul of a child — gently moulds thoughts that broaden character.

It all leads to this: you can help your child grow — *inside* — by affording the advantages of a musical education. He — or she — can learn best by *doing*. Let the youngster find pleasure and satisfaction and friendliness in ivory keys and restful music.

You'll never regret the day you first sat your child at a new piano. You will be placing *power* in that young one's hands — power to attain depths of understanding that help immeasurably in attaining future happiness.

First paragraph — *interest*, in the form of curiosity as to what is to follow. Second, third and fourth paragraphs, continuing the thoughts expressed in the first at the same time creating a *desire* through the discussion of Character. Fifth, sixth and seventh paragraphs, the building of *Conviction*, that a musical education is important in the life of every child — then the tie-in with the piano (the instrument being sold) and finally the *action*, which paragraphs have been omitted.

Following is a letter that skillfully discusses the benefits from not one, but five, products. It was

WRITING THE BODY

used by an industrial jobber. Notice how interest is aroused in the opening by the use of the word *exclusive*.

This letter is about five nationally known products that may be useful to you right now. Every one of them deserves your consideration on the basis of some *exclusive* feature.

The next five paragraphs give the reasons why these nationally known products could be useful to the prospect:

The TON-TEX Belt . . . because it's thinner for equal strength and stronger for equal thickness than any belt made — because it won't shrink, fray, stretch or deteriorate — because it will out-perform and out-last any other fabric belt on the market.

The DIAMOND DRIVE . . . because we can now supply you from our own stock any Diamond Roller Chain Drive from $\frac{1}{4}$ to 75 horse-power, in ratios up to 8.4 to 1, in motor speeds up to 1800 R.P.M. and give immediate delivery.

The FRANCKE FLEXIBLE COUPLING . . . because we are convinced that it is the most efficient and most economical of all flexible couplings . . . because it has fourteen distinct advantages that we'll be very happy to go over with you if you're interested.

SPARTAN HACK SAWS . . . because they last, work fast and cut straight — because they increase production and reduce power breakage — because they're stronger and tougher, therefore economical.

BALL BEARING LOOSE PULLEYS . . . because they're self-lubricating, due to the recess between the bearing races holding enough grease to last three or four months — because they're guaranteed to run perfectly true and without vibration.

Ask for the Latimer story on all of these five products. If there ever was a time to increase efficiency and decrease overhead, it's right NOW.

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

Suction

Suction is that quality of a letter which literally "drags" the reader from one paragraph to the next, until he has read the letter through. One of the first requirements of a letter is that it *be read*. No matter what you say, how you say it, or how attractive your offer may be, if the letter doesn't get read, it obviously hasn't a chance.

Another word for "suction" is "continuity," a smooth flow of connected thoughts that carry the reader logically from the first paragraph to the second, from the second to the third, from the third to the fourth, and so on.

Here's one of a series of letters sent by a piano manufacturer to his dealers and salesmen. See how unconsciously you "carry on" from one paragraph to the next:

What are you "fishing" for business with — what kind of bait?

Prospects today don't seem to be biting on the usual stuff at all. We have a retail store here in York, so we know from experience.

But give them something attractive, something that appeals to *everyone*, SOMETHING FOR NOTHING and instantly, the fishing for business gets better.

We know that from experience, too, for we have talked personally with dealers who are really using the Weaver Verti-Mignon Prize Contest. They tell us there is a distinct psychological advantage in being able to offer prospects the chance to get the piano of their choice entirely free.

They tell us they are closing prospects who didn't expect to buy for several months. They tell us their prospects are buying *better* pianos, spending more for them, in order to get in on the Prize Contest.

WRITING THE BODY

Why pass up such attractive "bait" — when it is so certain to get results? You wouldn't do that if you really were fishing. You'd use the bait that the fish wanted. You'd use the bait that got "strikes."

That's exactly the kind offered by the Weaver Prize Contest, and while the contest marches on there is still time to get in some very profitable "fishing."

Notice the continuity in this letter, sent out by a manufacturer of equipment used in electrotypes plants:

May we tell you about something that has proved extremely profitable in our own plate-making department — and *can be just as profitable in yours?*

Innumerable experiments with various stereo casting methods have led to the development of The Westcott & Thomson patented Vacuum Casting Box. Please do not confuse this with any other vacuum casting box. It is distinctly our own design, embodying precision qualities unequalled by any other similar unit.

We are using a whole battery of them now, in our own commercial plate-making plant, with great success. Many are in satisfactory operation in other plate foundries as well — all over the country. Everybody agrees . . . and you will too . . . that we've topped every casting method known from every standpoint.

The inside pages of the enclosed folder will tell you more about it. You will be particularly interested when I tell you that you can increase both speed and efficiency in your own shop without a necessarily large investment. Westcott & Thomson Patented Vacuum Casting Boxes are so priced that they literally *pay for themselves* in added profit on every job. And that's a promise!

We make other promises, too. Turn to the folder now and read about them. Then, for information about the specific box you need, mail the enclosed card.

* * *

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

This letter was designed to sell prospects on the idea of drinking Capon Springs Water. Note how easy it is to read, how you are literally *drawn* from one paragraph to the next. That's *suction*.

Are you open-minded this morning on the subject of how you can feel *better* than you have for many years?

A group of Physicians, including several past Presidents of the American Medical Association and some of the most distinguished men in the history of the profession, are calling upon you to discuss the question of YOUR HEALTH and how, with one minute a day, YOU CAN IMPROVE IT!

In the enclosed booklet, you will find amazing, authentic testimony, substantiated by the highest governmental authorities, which proves beyond doubt that the waters of Capon Springs are indeed possessed of almost magical qualities.

Said Dr. Wm. Gibson, former Professor of Surgery, University of Pennsylvania, "Upon myself, the Waters acted like magic. After ten days use of them, I felt as if I could ride on the whirlwind and direct the storm." Wouldn't you like to feel like that?

Wouldn't *you* like to feel ten years younger, full of glowing health and vigor, not just occasionally, but all day, *every* day?

Well, we guarantee that you CAN, or you won't be allowed to pay a cent for the Capon Water you've used in the trial. You see, we know from many years of experience how remarkably beneficial Capon really is. We have every confidence that it can improve *your* health as it has for thousands of others.

But read the booklet, and see if you don't agree that you owe it to yourself, to your family, to give Capon Water a fair trial. Please, for the present at least, believe me when I say that after a short while you will feel younger, more alive and gloriously healthy than you dreamed possible.

Conviction

Another essential requirement of a letter is that it be *believed*. It isn't enough that it just be read. After reading, the prospect must be in a frame of mind to accept the statements and claims as being absolutely true.

This you can accomplish by backing up the statements you make with facts to prove them; by making only statements that are not apt to be challenged or doubted; and by the sincerity you are able to put into your words.

You can usually tell at a glance when a letter lacks *believability*. When you are through reading, there is a big question mark in your mind. You're hovering somewhere between flat refusal to accept the claims and slight skepticism, which is almost as bad because you still won't buy if you're not sold on the idea that it is to your advantage to do so. To illustrate lack of believability, I can't help quoting from a sign I saw in the window of a very dingy-looking restaurant in one of the poorer sections of Philadelphia:

America's finest dinner

\$.25

This is gross exaggeration, of course, but you'd be surprised how many letters are guilty of the same crime in varying degrees.

The experienced letter writer, even before he puts pencil to paper, will come to some conclusion in his own mind about the probable mental attitude of the prospect. Will he be receptive to the prop-

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osition? Will he be indifferent to it? Only by anticipating the answers can you achieve the very necessary quality of believability.

Here's a letter, the statements in which no reader would question:

Did you ever see a *real* sheik?

We don't mean the tea-drinking kind, but the white-robed, bearded sheiks of the Desert that you find in French Northern Africa.

If you'll come with us on this ideal Mediterranean Cruise . . . sail on the Homeric — "The Ship of Splendor" — with a selected group of the type of people you'd like to know . . . you'll see many even more fascinating things than an African Sheik.

You'll be thrilled to the tip of your toes . . . for there's Jerusalem, the Riviera, the great Casino at Monte Carlo, the Alhambra, Cadiz, Tunis, the newly excavated ruins of Carthage, Vesuvius and Naples, the Baker's shop in Pompeii (remember your Caesar?), Athens and literally hundreds of strange, exotic scenes to add colorful history to your own autobiography.

There's a 72-page illustrated book on Thos. Cook & Sons Cruise to the Mediterranean and one copy has been laid aside for you. Won't you request it on the enclosed card? It's free, of course.

Here's a letter in which possible skepticism is offset by the guarantee of a reputable company:

A more abundant supply of hot water . . . and lower monthly costs than you've ever enjoyed before!

These are just two of the reasons why you should consider Electric Furnace-Man equipment.

If you're using a gas or electric water heater now, we'll guarantee you lower costs — *considerably lower*. If you're using one of the old-fashioned coal heaters — we'll *garan-*

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tee you more hot water, lower costs and the convenience of always having the preferred water temperature.

No matter what you're using or what your costs, you owe it to yourself to make a comparison. Let us tell you how the Electric Furnace-Man is being used for automatic hot water supply, how much hot water you can expect from it and how much (or rather how little) it costs.

Then see how it stacks up against your present equipment. It won't cost anything and won't obligate you a particle to find out. . . .

Put the card in the mail *today* (because the demand for hot water is greatest in the summer), and we'll send you complete information.

One more example to illustrate the point, in which *believability* is helped by the sincere way in which the letter is phrased:

May we add our congratulations to those of your family and friends, on your recent marriage?

You'll say, of course, that we are a bit selfish in our interest, for obviously a new family just starting out means a new prospect. But, seriously, we want to help.

If we can be *genuinely* helpful the *first* time you buy a rug or carpet — you'll come to us right through to your golden wedding anniversary!

So won't you give us the opportunity to *prove* our sincerity — to point out to you from our complete stock of Hardwick & Magee Company rugs and carpets those which exactly fit your needs, your rooms, and your budget?

It's amazing what a few carefully selected rugs or carpets will do to give you a head start in furnishing a home. And for finances — well, we know the problems facing a new family.

Come in — won't you? You'll be mighty welcome, and pleased too, with our unusually fine assortment of rugs and carpets.

Personality

Another word for it is *naturalness*, that quality of a letter which knocks down the bars of resistance and puts you on friendly terms with the writer. A letter that has personality unconsciously makes you “warm up” to whatever proposition it contains. Whether you respond or not, you feel as though you’d like to. Your reaction is one of friendliness for the person (or company) who wrote it. You feel that the writer was absolutely sincere in whatever he said. Here’s a letter that has personality even though it is obviously a circular letter:

Thinking of

building a new home?

I know that it’s getting mighty near the “25th” and that our minds are all pretty full of “what to give Jimmy and what to give Jean” and all the rest, but . . .

If there’s a house problem to be solved — it *must be solved*, Christmas or no Christmas.

You may have already chosen your lot and want to build. You may want alterations or additions to your present home. You may be in a position where it is necessary to find a new home, yet not have any particular plans.

Let us make a suggestion? Call Germantown 1246 and give us just a rough idea of what you have in mind. Then forget it entirely and go right on with Christmas shopping and preparations.

We’ll do all the thinking and worrying for you and come to you with definite recommendations — and you won’t even have to feel obligated.

Forty years of experience as Contractors and Builders will go to work for you the minute you phone.

This letter has personality simply because it is so naturally written:

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May we tempt you this morning with a free copy of the latest Winston Universal "Graphic Dictionary"?

As you may have guessed, it's not an easy job for an outside printer to get even a "look in" with some of the larger agencies like your own. Yet from your standpoint, there is every reason why we should be doing some of your work.

Certainly there couldn't be any question about *QUALITY* for we've been doing fine work for more than 30 years — have plenty of specimens to prove it.

And certainly we have the advantage when it comes to *PRICE* and *SERVICE*. When a publisher has learned to turn out literally millions of books at a profit, he *must* of necessity be geared up to economically print folders, booklets, broadsides, catalogs, etc.

DAY AND NIGHT operation of our presses assures prompt delivery with no extra charges for over time — *an important point!*

We should like to make it worth your while to listen, for not more than ten minutes, to the rest of the story — hence this suggestion that you let us present you with one of our finest self-pronouncing dictionaries (1152 pages — size $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 7\frac{7}{8}''$) in return for your courtesy.

What do you say — a fair exchange? Put the card in the mail and tell us a convenient time.

A Good Test

The way to check up on a letter for personality and naturalness is to read it aloud. If it sounds stilted, formal and cold when you read it, then keep working on it until you have "red blood" streaming through every line.

Read this letter aloud and see if it doesn't pass the test:

There's no getting away from it — a wobbly table *is* annoying.

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And as long as there are unsteady tables in your dining room, you're always faced with the possibility of ruined dresses, angry guests and the resulting confusion and embarrassment.

Your restaurant or dining room may be the exception of course. It's possible that there isn't an unsteady piece of furniture in the place. If that's the case, you are very fortunate and we congratulate you.

But, just to be sure. Won't you check up?

It's a cinch you don't want to risk the results of *WOBBLE*. Nor do you want to resort to the antiquated cure which means a folded-up piece of paper or sliver of wood that is always slipping out.

The only modern cure is "*ADJUSTA*" and we'd like very much indeed to send you samples to try out on the "worst" table in your dining room.

The inside of this letter-folder tells the whole story of "Wobble — and its cure." You'll find it interesting reading and afterwards —

The enclosed card is all ready for you to fill out and return.

We — Our — Us

One of the biggest obstacles to the achieving of personality in a letter is a wrong balance in the use of personal pronouns. Hence we must avoid leaning too far in either direction. You've seen many letters in which "we," "our" and "us" seem to stick out everywhere. That is wrong because you're telling the story entirely from your side of the fence, whereas the prospect is interested in *himself* and what you can do for him.

You have also seen letters where the writer has bent over backwards the other way. The "you" becomes conspicuous, and that is wrong because it seems to rob the message of all sincerity.

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The proper balance in personal pronouns results in a "you-and-I" type of letter, which inspires the reader-across-the desk-from-the-writer feeling that builds confidence. The point is this: don't talk entirely about *your* idea or product and don't talk entirely about *his* problem and needs. Link the two together. You'll find more on this subject in the section on "Dictated Letters," page 137.

Chapter V

WRITING THE CLOSE

WE ARE now concerned with that part of the letter which has to do with the actual landing of the "fish." It's one thing to choose the proper bait, take it to the right place, and bring your catch up to the boat. It's something else to really land him. Some of the biggest fish ever hooked jumped back into the water a split second before they were caught. At least that's what the fishermen tell us.

Sending out letters to get inquiries or orders is something like fishing, certainly to the extent that "nearums" don't count. You *must* get your prospects to respond before your investment can yield a return.

The letter that arouses interest, creates desire and builds confidence in the proposition, only to leave the prospect "hanging in mid-air" so far as a decision to act is concerned, isn't worth the paper it's written on. Authorities agree that fully 60 per cent of the letters that fail can attribute their failure to a wrong closing paragraph. To put it another way, a *strong* close will many times double and even triple the returns obtained from a letter properly constructed in other respects.

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You've seen letters produce good results although they didn't have a particularly strong close? Of course you have, and here's why:

The prospects for any proposition can be divided into three groups: (1) those who want what you have to sell and are literally *waiting to buy*, (2) those who *can be persuaded to buy* with the proper appeal and (3) those who for one reason or another *can't buy*, no matter how attractive the proposition might be.

The prospects in Class 1 are naturally going to respond, even though the close in the letter may be weak. Those in Class 3 will not buy in any event, so you can forget them. And those in Class 2, the group to which every sales letter should be aimed, will not be moved to reply unless the letter follows the formula from start to finish and arouses interest, creates desire, inspires conviction and *gets action*.

Types of Closers

There are quite a number of different kinds of closing paragraphs. There would have to be, because there are so many different kinds of letter objectives.

The Low-gear Type

For instance, one type of letter aims at nothing more than "keeping in touch" with the prospect or customer. The closing in this case is simply a graceful exit. When you're through saying what you've set out to say, you stop. That's the end of

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the letter because actually there's nothing specific you want the reader to do, at least at the moment.

A monthly letter to dealers winds up by saying:

The Heller & Brightly guarantee that goes with every instrument we make, is your assurance of complete satisfaction and years of dependable, accurate service.

A laundry's letter to housewives closed by saying:

Our routeman will be around soon to give you complete information and to answer any questions that might be in your mind. Look for him.

A quality candy store sent a letter a month to a selected list of prospects. The following is typical of this type of close:

Your letter, call or visit to the store will be very welcome.

These are good paragraphs. Anything stronger would be decidedly in poor taste and fruitless in the bargain. Here's another of the same character in a letter used by a builder:

The road to the home you would like to build can be made easy and pleasant. We are ready and able to help you.

The thought behind the whole appeal is that "whenever you're ready, it will be to your advantage to think of us." This kind of letter can't expect to get immediate results and doesn't attempt to. Hence, the closing paragraph is of the mild variety calculated to leave a good taste in the mouth rather than induce immediate action.

The Second-gear Type

Now come letters that require a little stronger type of close. They are not "high pressure" in any sense of the word, but they carry a little more urging than those just discussed.

One effective way of handling this situation is to end your story with a question, asking the reader point-blank if he won't take some kind of action. To illustrate, a brick company wound up a letter to an architect this way:

Whether you've a building in plan right now or not, or whether you're in doubt about the claims we've made, won't you use the enclosed card and let us tell you more about them?

Here are two more good closers of this type:

If you are interested in better results and a lower cost of operation, why not accept that challenge and order a few drums for test and comparison?

* * *

Since we are willing and glad to guarantee these same results in Diesel engines, don't you think it might pay you to order a few drums and see for yourself under your own conditions, just what M.H.S. can do for you?

The following closing paragraph combines the question with a statement that strengthens the request and lends weight to the argument already presented. It was in a letter selling surfboards to retail sporting-goods buyers:

Why not send us a small order and try them out? You won't be risking much and we feel confident you'll find them both fast moving and profitable.

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This one, in a letter about a suburban development, is of the same kind:

Why not call Germantown 1246 now and let us take you there and back? Decide after you know ALL the facts and have seen ALL the advantages.

Another close of the second-gear variety is one that ends with a definite and rather strong statement. We are still not in the category of pressure closing. No return card is enclosed and the letter will not be entirely judged on the basis of immediate results. What we are trying to accomplish may take ten or a dozen follow-up letters, yet we want to make each as productive as possible. The last two paragraphs of a follow-up letter to a prospective dealer illustrate a close that is frequently effective in cases of this kind:

With that in mind, please compare the LOVEKIN, point by point, with any other heater on the market, regardless of price.

If you do that, we feel quite sure you'll agree to the tremendous possibilities in the LOVEKIN LINE for an increase both in profit and load.

Here's another statement-type close that is as strong as it can be under the circumstances:

A suggestion from you that your patient investigate this new triumph of science would be appreciated by everyone concerned.

Here is still another, to make sure that you understand the type and the situations wherein it is appropriate:

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The attached folder discusses cost and furnishes a convenient way of requesting complete information.

The High-gear Type

Letters sent out to get inquiries or orders, on the other hand, *must* induce action if they are to be productive. Their success or failure is judged entirely by the number of replies that come in and the sales that result. This kind of letter can't have any wishy-washy close. It cannot merely make a graceful exit. Nor can it leave the prospect in any doubt as to what you want him to do. It must be both urging and convincing, so that the prospect will not only have an easy, convenient way to reply but a logical, common-sense *reason* for replying.

To illustrate:

It has so many exclusive features and advantages that we can't possibly tell you about them in a letter, but if you'll return the enclosed card, we'll see that you receive complete information, and without the slightest obligation of any kind. As a first step toward a more profitable business, put your request in the mail today.

Step by step the reader was led through interest, desire and conviction to definite action. "Put your request in the mail today."

In a letter whose objective was selling the prospect on the idea of requesting a booklet, this very effective close was used:

You want to keep abreast of the times, of course, and whether you can use this plan to advantage or not, at least you'll want to know about it.

Fill in and return the card today and the booklet will be put in the return mail.

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Notice the *reason* for replying — “You want to keep abreast of the times, . . . at least you’ll want to know about it.”

Here are some more closers that include reasons as well as bids for action:

We’re all ready for you . . . any day you say. Fill in and return the enclosed card or call Stevenson 5823. You’ll soon find Elite’s new 2-day plan saving you both time and money.

* * *

Return the enclosed request for information card and we’ll be glad to show you how you can install a new standard condition-air system, have all the advantages of perfect refrigeration *and at the same time save money!*

* * *

If you’ll request it, I’ll be very glad to send you one of these books. It will take you about six minutes to read and might well be worth many hundreds of dollars in increased sales.

* * *

What do you say — a dictionary for a 10 minute interview — fair exchange? Put the card in the mail and tell us a convenient time.

* * *

Put the card in the mail now while you’re thinking about it and we’ll send you the catalog immediately — free and without the slightest obligation. Don’t put it off . . . the sooner you get started, the sooner you’ll have the specialized knowledge that commands a good salary.

* * *

Decide now to put Goodall “Newtype” Cord on your trucks this season and profit by the fast, trouble-free service this hose insures! We can make immediate shipment of any size or length. Just write, phone or wire our nearest branch.

Chapter VI

HOW TO MAKE A LETTER PRODUCTIVE

A LETTER has the best chance of producing satisfactory returns when there has been put into it a *motive* for accepting the proposition it contains.

People, as a general rule, don't do things in this world just because we ask them to. If you doubt that, stop a stranger on the street sometime and say, "Would you be good enough to come around to my office tomorrow morning?" If you were that stranger, wouldn't you be inclined to say, "Why should I?"

If you tell a prospect how marvelous your machine is and what fine materials and workmanship have gone into its making, *but neglect to tell what the machine will do for him*, you can't really blame him for not being interested. By not telling him what your machine can do for him, you failed to supply a motive for accepting your proposition — and therein lies the secret to a good many hundreds of letter failures. Letters without a motive can sell but one class of prospects — the fellows who will buy no matter what you tell them, because they want what you're selling. As was pointed out in a previous chapter, every letter should aim at the prospects who are a challenge, those who say in

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effect, "Come sell me. I'll buy it if you make me want it."

There are five predominating motives which, if properly used, will unlock the door of a prospect's interest and induce him to act. Every successful speech, letter, sales talk or sermon contains one or another of these same motives:

1. The desire for a profit or saving.
2. The desire for comfort, pleasure or convenience (self-indulgence).
3. The desire for protection of life, health, property or interest.
4. The desire to play fair (loyalty, courtesy, obligation, etc.).
5. The desire to own (pride of possession).

Analyze any letter that has produced good results, any speech that has "gone over with a bang," any sales talk that has proved its ability to get the name on the dotted line or any sermon that has kept the congregation awake — and you'll find at least one of these five motives.

When someone tells you to write from the other fellow's viewpoint, what he really wants you to do is to give your readers a motive for accepting your proposition.

Right here let me differentiate between a *reason* and a *motive*. When I say "motive for accepting your proposition," I mean something deeper and closer to the human emotions than just a cold, matter-of-fact reason. We must have reasons for doing things, of course, but, even with reasons, we don't do them without motives. It is by means

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of the appropriate motives that we are able to arouse the first spark of interest, fan it into a flame of desire, keep it alive with the fuel of conviction and finally crash through with a blaze of action.

Following is an appeal to motive No. 1 — the desire for a profit:

TWO WAYS FOR CANNERS TO INCREASE PROFIT!

Here are two suggestions for increasing income — one having to do with *new business*, the other with *lower overhead*.

You can accomplish both with one or more of the Anderson Machines described inside!

No. 1 — these remarkable machines are so flexible that you can cut your product into all sorts of original and distinctive shapes, thus making it look different and more appealing than your competitors'. That's always an effective way of increasing sales.

No. 2 — you can reduce the cost of cutting, dicing, slicing, cubing, etc. with Anderson Machines because of their almost unbelievable operating economy. *And they cost less to begin with, too!*

On top of all that, you'll have longer wear and more satisfactory work. Anderson knives won't stretch or bend out of shape because the dies are made out of solid steel blocks for permanency and accuracy.

There's really a lot more to the story that you'll find interesting. Won't you send off a request today, for complete information?

This letter is of exactly the same type:

Separately, we are sending you, without charge, one of the new TRISCO HOSIERY LAUNDERING UNITS, described in the

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enclosed folder. I should say, we *will* send it as soon as you tell us the proper size.

If you are interested, as most Beauty Shop proprietors are, in taking advantage of EVERY opportunity to make extra money — then you may be interested in telling some of your good customers about this new, revolutionary method of washing stockings.

First, accept one complete unit with our compliments, for your own use. Try it out. See how wonderfully soft and new looking even your oldest stockings become when washed this new, safer way.

Then, for only telling your customers about it — having it on display in your shop — answering questions that arise — you can make a dollar on every one they buy. You'll make a handsome profit, too, on the repeat business that develops on Trisco Soap and Trisco Finish.

But first — mail back the card. Let us send you a Trisco Laundering Unit entirely free, and without the slightest obligation to do anything but take orders from those of your customers (and we predict there will be many) who want one for themselves.

Be sure to tell us on the card what size stockings you wear, so that we can send the proper size unit.

The example below is an unusual application letter that uses the same profit motive:

I am *not* looking for a position!

No ordinary job will be even considered. I want to undertake what you may consider a seemingly impossible task — that of increasing your profits in the face of vicious price and service competition.

If you've had an unsatisfactory earnings and dividend record during the past five or six years; if your sales have been decreasing and you've been selling most of your plant output at no profit — then I respectfully apply for the back-breaking, full-time job of turning red ink into black.

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Because of a rather exceptional background and a thorough understanding of those principles of manufacturing which govern pricing, selling and profit, I can determine for you —

1. Your minimum net profit requirement.
2. The correct selling price for each product.
3. Proper costs for production, plant operation and management.
4. The proper quantity discounts.
5. And the procedure and expenditure necessary to insure disposal of your normal output *at prices that will earn the predetermined profit requirement.*

If these things are at all interesting to you, we can discuss them more in detail and more satisfactorily, in a personal interview.

Won't you set a convenient time?

A twin to the profit motive is the saving motive, and the two are so close in character that we class them together. Almost all of us, even those fortunate enough to be independently wealthy, are interested in saving money. Notice how the idea is brought out in the following letter:

CONFIDENTIAL TIP ON NEW COAL PRICES

On reliable authority we have learned that wholesale coal prices will advance next fall. Disquieting news — but there is a way to beat the rising market if you act now!

REDUCED SUMMER PRICES NOW IN EFFECT!

For a short time only, we are voluntarily lowering coal prices to give you the opportunity to lay in next winter's fuel supply. Because all signs point to much higher prices in the near future, this is a real chance to save!

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EGG, STOVE and NUT COAL	\$9.25 per ton
PEA COAL	7.75 per ton
BUCKWHEAT COAL	7.25 per ton

You can appreciate why these prices apply to cash orders only — and also why it is so important to get your order in right away.

Naturally, there will be no compromise with quality. You can be sure of receiving the same high grade, long burning anthracite that has made Mathers' Coal outstandingly popular for 80 years.

We want to give our customers every chance to save money. Because delays may be costly, we urge you to phone in your order as promptly as possible.

The number is Sherwood 0290.

This letter to a selected list, sent out by an exclusive women's specialty shop, presents the same point in an interesting manner:

It's the *last* part of this letter that will give you a real thrill, so I'll waste no time getting to the point. But first I want to spread the news that we've just made the final, last-minute purchases to complete what is truly a magnificent selection of the very newest spring and summer gowns, suits, coats and hats.

I can't resist saying that it's the finest showing we've ever made. The delightful new Paris models are so colorful! And I'm sure you'll particularly like the exciting boleros, flaring black crepe skirts with frothy marquissette ruffles. Two-piece dinner and evening gowns are *in* — decidedly. Now — here's the thrill! We've hand-picked a grand assortment of the latest creations for day and evening wear to be offered at thirty-eight dollars. *All* of them were tagged at more than twice that amount — many at more than a hundred.

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We made this special group large enough to satisfy all your needs for spring — with a goodly number of really dramatic dinner and evening gowns for the more formal affairs on your calendar this season.

This is important: we can't promise re-orders. But you'll surely find what you want, if you stop in soon. Incidentally, you'll not be obliged to pay the Philadelphia sales tax if your purchases are delivered outside of Pennsylvania.

Motive No. 2 appeals to the desire for comfort, pleasure, convenience and other forms of self-indulgence, including the gratification of appetite, curiosity, etc. Here are two typical examples:

DAINTY VARIETY IN YOUR MENUS WITH THIS NEW FOOD!

Here's a new food — delicious, healthful, appetizing, and dainty. It will allow you to vary your menus and on top of that, will do more for you than any food you've ever eaten. Have you ever heard of Pecano? It's been tested and approved by *Good Housekeeping* and quite a number of stores are selling it, but it may be new to your neighborhood, and if so, you have a real treat ahead.

Pecano is a nutritious all-nut food (the result of a patented method exclusive to our Company). The choicest of fresh Georgia Pecans are so trans-shaped that they literally melt in your mouth. Nuts *made* digestible — that's what Pecano is — Nature's oldest, richest food transformed into a delicious, nourishing, easily digested food that can be served and eaten in hundreds of delightful ways.

SOMETHING NEW TO SERVE!

Most women are constantly on the lookout for new ideas for luncheon, tea and the regular daily menus — something different for the jaded appetite that every so often tires of sameness. Pecano is the perfect answer. Wait 'til you see

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the recipes that show how to make Pecano Orange Bread, Pecano Butterscotch, Pecano Penuche, Pecano Apple Whip, Pecano Corn Loaf, Pecano Celery Croustades, Pecano Risotto — and there are eighty other tried and tested recipes for new and different kinds of bread, cake, candy, entrees, salads, sandwiches and desserts.

There's reason enough for trying Pecano, but there's so much more to say about this wholesome, natural food than just how good it is.

NOT ONLY DELICIOUS — HIGHLY NOURISHING, TOO!

Nuts generally have the reputation for being hard to digest. And they ARE. How often have you heard someone say, "I adore nuts, but they don't agree with me"? Scientific research has shown that countless small nut particles pass through the alimentary tract wholly indigested and this means not only distress but the loss of valuable nutrition.

In the invention of Pecano, science has completely solved this problem. It comes to you abounding in vitality-producing, body-building elements . . . a blood- and tissue-builder in wonderfully concentrated form . . . a delicious, natural food that gives you the benefit of high health value with little digestive effort. Pecano supplies valuable protein for building and repairing body tissues; natural nut oil for producing energy; food minerals, without which life cannot be sustained; and other vital elements essential to good health and resistance to disease.

The important thing about Pecano is that it contains the two great food essentials in proper ratio and in the purest, sweetest form. The proteins in Pecano are COMPLETE proteins, which means that in themselves they are sufficient to supply the full quota of tissue-building material.

Do you wonder thousands of women have adopted Pecano for everyday use — and call it the ideal food? Pecano is more than a table delicacy. It is a source of energy, "pep," vitality. It's convenient, easy and economical to use.

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There's no waste. It requires no cooking or preparing. Pecano is *all food* — ready to eat just as it comes.

SPECIAL TRIAL OFFER AND FREE RECIPE BOOK!

So sure am I that once you've tasted Pecano you'll fall in love with its rich, rare flavor and want it for *your* table — not only for its deliciousness, but for its health-building qualities — that I am going to make you a very special introductory offer. Pecano sells for \$1.30 per pound — 5 pounds for \$6. If you'll send your trial order in promptly, I'll send you, postpaid, **TWO POUNDS FOR TWO DOLLARS**, and include without charge the 28-page book of delicious Pecano recipes.

Furthermore, if you're not entirely satisfied with your purchase, I'll refund your money any time within two weeks — without question. So many people are today using Pecano regularly — after having tried it as I want you to now — that I feel confident you'll soon be ordering the five-pound containers and serving this wholesome, tasty food on all occasions.

Put two one-dollar bills, or your check for two dollars, in the enclosed envelope. With *Good Housekeeping* and the better food stores all over the country recommending it, you can be sure that Pecano is all we claim for it.

My offer, however, only holds good if you send in your order promptly. No postage is required for the self-addressed envelope — just fill out your request, enclose your remittance of \$2 — and mail.

Then be prepared for the **TREAT OF YOUR LIFE!**

This letter also uses motive No. 2

Women have asked for it — demanded it — never had it before. Elite offers it to you now.

Two-day delivery on all types of laundry service!

We'll call Monday morning, for instance, and deliver on Wednesday afternoon . . . Tuesday, and deliver Thurs-

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day . . . Wednesday and deliver Friday . . . any morning in fact and deliver in the afternoon of the second day.

Think what that means. With faster laundry service, you can get along with fewer clothes.

If it'll help the budget any, you can get along without those extra shirts or suits or dresses that you thought you'd have to buy.

There isn't a laundry in town that offers you such an amazing, such a revolutionary service as this new 2-day delivery plan of the Elite laundry.

And remember, no matter what type of Elite service you choose, your bundle will be classified as to color and fabric, placed *separately* in a net bag that takes all the wear while the clothes are being washed in 4 suds and 5 rinses of rain-soft water. Every operation is scientifically controlled under Elite's exclusive process.

We're all ready for you . . . any day you say. Fill in and return the enclosed card or call Stevenson 5823. You'll soon find Elite's new 2-day plan saving you both time and money.

Motive No. 3 appeals to the desire for protection of life, health, property or interest. The age-old motive of self-preservation is a powerful one. Whatever one's share of health and worldly goods, one wants to hang onto them. The motive in this case therefore may take the form of fear, however subtly expressed — fear that the life or health of loved ones may be in danger, that something which belongs to one may be in jeopardy or that all may not go well with some proposition in which one may be interested. Read the several letters that follow and see if you don't recognize motive No. 3 running through them:

HOW TO MAKE A LETTER PRODUCTIVE

A friend of mine is happier today than he has been for a long while. And he has reason to be.

For the first time since he and Mary were married — incidentally they have two small children — my friend says that he feels really comfortable about the future. If anything happens to him during the next 20 years, his wife will receive \$100 a month for a full 20 years and then \$10,000 in one lump sum.

A short while ago, such protection as that would have been far beyond his reach. Now, he can afford it easily, due to a new plan which my company is sponsoring and which no married man with children can afford to pass up.

The Plan needn't operate for 20 years. It can be 15 years, or 10. And it needn't be for \$10,000 — it can be much more or much less. It can be made to fit, *whatever* your protection requirements might be.

If you can possibly squeeze out a few dollars a week to buy security and peace of mind for your wife and boys (or girls or both) — you can take my word for it that you'll be very much interested in this unusual plan.

At any rate, I am going to phone you in a day or so and see if you won't let me tell you more about it.

* * *

Don't read this letter if you can
say "yes" to just one question!

Can you afford to be sick . . . or have an accident?

If you can't, and most of us are in that class . . . then by all means take advantage of this special Health and Accident Policy available to anyone between the ages of 16 and 70, male or female.

\$10,000 worth of protection for
full year for \$10!

Anybody can afford \$10 . . . none of us can afford, easily, the piling up of doctor's bills, medicines, etc., particularly when it's coupled with a temporary loss of income

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

This is the new and improved Policy of the oldest and strongest Health and Accident Insurance Company in the world . . . which is in its 42nd year of successful business and has paid over 12 million dollars to sick and injured policy holders.

Read the enclosed folder carefully. See how completely it covers all the usual types of accidents and illnesses . . . then fill out the application and return it to us with check or money order.

We guarantee to refund the full amount if you are not satisfied with the policy after you have received it. So don't delay!

P. S. None of us expect to be sick . . . but then none of us really know.

Motive No. 4 aims at the average person's normal desire to play fair and be loyal — his desire to fulfill a sense of obligation, courtesy or honesty.

Notice motive No. 4 in these two letters:

So many people shy away from so-called advertising letters that I hasten to say — this *isn't* one. It's a personal letter requesting information and I'll be very grateful to you if you'll give it to me.

We've just recently sent you a number of folders and samples of HOPEWELL KRAFT BOARD, a box material made of the same strong *KRAFT* so universally used for wrapping paper.

In these pieces, we discussed the fine savings available to you through its use — savings substantial enough to be interesting *anytime*, but particularly attractive *NOW*, when economies of all kinds are welcome.

This campaign, while highly successful in a general way, failed completely as far as you are concerned and I want to know if there's been any slip-up on our part.

Would you mind very much, simply as a business courtesy which I shall greatly appreciate, taking your pencil and jotting down the answers to a few questions listed on the reverse side of this letter?

HOW TO MAKE A LETTER PRODUCTIVE

Don't bother to dictate — just scribble your reply on the back and use the enclosed stamped envelope.

I hope some day there'll be some way of repaying your kindness . . . in the meantime, please accept our best wishes for a happy and prosperous year!

* * *

Last year, when you very kindly sent to us your discarded clothes, furniture, shoes, and other things . . . you did something that had a tremendous influence upon the happiness of men and women, . . . old, handicapped and unfortunate.

The old pair of shoes went to an aged cobbler to be repaired. They brought him a compensation that helped keep his head up and maintain his self respect.

The coats reached the work bench of a woman whose fingers were once nimble and expert as a dressmaker. Unfortunate circumstances had caused those fingers to lose some of their cunning and the coat brought work at a time of greatest need.

The broken table . . . it brought employment for a carpenter, a painter and a man who had been a shipper. Each was paid and enabled to once more look the world in the face. The shoes, the coat and the table, repaired and reconditioned, were sold to the poor at prices they could afford. So it is with everything we receive.

In salvaging men . . . and women . . . and things . . . the Goodwill Industries holds a unique place in philanthropy in 40 cities of America. Through your gifts, you have become an active part and an opportunity is now presented to you to further that participation, through membership in the Goodwill Industries!

It costs but \$2 a year . . . less than four cents a week. Your membership, with thousands of others, provides the funds to carry on this work. Won't you attach your check or money order to the enclosed card and send it in? Thank you a thousand times.

* * *

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

Motive No. 5 appeals to that part of a person's make-up which takes a definite pride in the ownership of something fine and which finds satisfaction in the maintaining of self-respect and in the building of reputation and prestige. That such things constitute real motives for action is elementary. What I want to do here is simply to make you conscious of them. Most of us *know* how vital it is to keep the old head down during a golf swing, but how easily and often we forget. Most of us know how vital motives are in the preparation of every letter, and yet how easy it is to sail right into an argument without at least one of them with us to insure success.

See if you can't see motive No. 5 between the lines of these examples:

One of the finest things that Maron has built in its seventy-three years of candy making is the character of following that so distinguishes this unusual candy.

The Maron kind of people are a discriminating, particular people who find little satisfaction in anything short of the very best. It would be unnatural for them not to lean toward Maron whether their choice depended on purity or genuine goodness.

As you plan for your St. Valentine's Day or Washington's Birthday parties, remember that *everybody* likes "Maron's" and that even an informal affair is glorified by its presence. We are prepared with special candies and favors for both of these events and shall be very happy indeed to give your order personal attention.

P. S. Those of your friends who are going abroad would enjoy a Maron steamer package. May we show you some?

HOW TO MAKE A LETTER PRODUCTIVE

There's something mighty human and interesting about a man big enough to admit his shortcomings.

A successful man, controlling fifteen separate businesses and a large factory, says in his letter — "The Britannica has saved me, by sound advice, more than I paid for it." But it did more than that!

"It has taught me the wonder of a hobby and how to play it. It has made smooth my home life by giving my wife and children knowledge obtainable at a moment's notice. It has opened up the world to me for travel.

"It has helped me to improve my education, enabling me to undertake public work. It has smashed to pieces any egotistical ideas of 'know-all' by illustrating the extent of my ignorance." And so on.

I don't believe any of us realize how little we do know until we have at our side, always available, the overwhelming number of facts comprising literally a summary of all the knowledge in the world.

It's a thrill to have the "answer to everything" so accessible and I'd certainly like you to have a taste of it. This time . . . won't you *use* the card?

P. S. No obligation and no annoyance. And don't forget the 40% saving.

* * *

It is interesting to note that very few socially undesirable people have an appreciation for music. The two are incompatible. Music — and particularly the ability to play — develops fine perceptions and sensitivities — builds and refines character.

Your child should have a musical education — for the youngster's own happiness! Interest in music keeps young minds — during leisure time — in pleasant active channels. And what a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment your child will get when he or she can speak professionally about a piano having "full tone" and "quick touch."

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

That's why it is important to start your youngster's musical education on a piano of which the child can always be proud — an instrument he or she can grow to love for its fine qualities, its sheer beauty of tone.

A Weaver instrument would be your child's selection if a musical knowledge was already developed. When you see one of these superb pianos, I am sure it will be your choice, too.

The care and enduring strength with which it has been built; the rich beauty of its lines make it stand out as an instrument of charming perfection — one that you will cherish always.

Chapter VII

LETTER PROBLEMS

WE'VE talked a lot about how letters should be written. Now let's *write* some, starting from scratch and carrying the job right through to the finished letter.

Problem No. 1. This is a comparatively simple one. Our client is a retail coal dealer. The product, of course, is domestic coal. An analysis brings out, first, the fact that we are able to offer a worth-while saving. Second, that we are selling good clean quality coal. Third, that it can be bought on a convenient budget basis.

An analysis of the market shows that our prospects are the everyday sort of people, interested in getting the necessities of life at the lowest possible cost. To get the letter off to a good start, let's arouse interest by beginning:

Wouldn't it be a grand and glorious feeling, when the time comes to start the heater fire next Fall, to know that your entire season's coal supply has been paid for — almost without your knowing it — at a real saving!

Certainly that should get them to go on if only to find out what the letter is about. So let's continue to arouse interest by telling them:

Well, that's exactly what the Mathers' budget plan enables you to do, and here's how it works:

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

Those last five words are almost certain to get the reader into the third paragraph, so now we can start stating the proposition:

Anytime between now and June 1st, give us your order for as many tons of good clean Mathers' coal as you think you will need next winter. You'll save real money, because we will accept your order at the low spring prices, which go up again, as you know, in the Fall."

Now we must explain how easy it is to save and tell something of the method. So we go on:

Pay as little as \$1 per week, depending on the size of your order, throughout the summer. You'll hardly miss these small weekly payments, and when heater season comes again, you'll be all set for winter, without having to even think about ordering coal — or paying for it! We will make complete delivery before November 1st, or as the coal is paid for, whichever you prefer.

It's time now to start leading up to the "action" part of the letter, so let's ask a question:

Doesn't this sound like a sensible procedure . . . a wise investment? Many of our customers took advantage of the plan last year, and they tell us that buying coal this way is both easy and pleasant.

Finally there is the close — driving for a phone call or a return of the enclosed reply card so that the salesman will have some definite leads to work on:

Call us on the phone, today, or if you prefer to have a representative call, mail the card. Remember, all orders must be placed before June 1st to insure low spring prices!

LETTER PROBLEMS

Here is the completed letter:

Wouldn't it be a grand and glorious feeling, when the time comes to start the heater fire again, next Fall, to know that your entire season's coal supply had been paid for . . . almost without your knowing it . . . and at a *real saving*?

Well, that's exactly what the Mathers' Budget Plan enables you to do; and here's how it works:

Anytime between now and June 1st, give us your order for as many tons of good, clean Mathers' coal as you think you will need next Winter. *You'll save real money*, because we will accept your order at the *low Spring prices*, which go up again, as you know, in the Fall.

Pay as little as One Dollar per week, depending on the size of your order, throughout the Summer. You'll hardly miss these small weekly payments, and when "heater season" comes again, you'll be all set for Winter, without having to even *think* about ordering coal . . . or *paying for it!* We will make complete delivery before November 1st, or as the coal is paid for, whichever you prefer.

Doesn't this sound like a sensible procedure . . . a *wise investment*? Many of our customers took advantage of the plan last year, and they tell us that buying coal was really both easy and pleasant.

Call us on the 'phone today, or if you prefer to have a representative call, mail the card. Remember, all orders must be placed before June 1st, to insure *low Spring prices!*

Sincerely,

P.S. When you have paid for three tons or more, and delivery has been made, we will give you a beautiful clock, absolutely free, in appreciation of your business.

Problem No. 2. Our client is a high-grade resort hotel. Its service and facilities constitute the "product." Analysis shows that the things we have to talk about are new low rates, good food,

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

safety of construction, golf and other sports, the exclusiveness of the hotel, etc.

Our prospects are a selected group of people, of the type that would be acceptable to the management and guests and who can afford to pay the price for fine accommodations.

The proposition is a good one because of the recent reduction in rates — in short, we can offer the same advantages but for considerably less money.

We're off. Let's open up by getting in some suggestion of *news*, which always carries them on to the second paragraph:

You'll be agreeably surprised to learn how inexpensively you can now enjoy a vacation at one of the smartest, most exclusive mountain resorts in the East.

Having started with the subject of cost, we'll naturally have to follow through, but, before we really tell them the news, let's justify the former rates, which were unquestionably high. Then from that statement, we lead them to the lower rates in effect now:

'The rates at Buckwood Inn have always been commensurate with the character of its service, with the excellence of its food, with the unusual facilities for enjoyment.

'Today, although Buckwood Inn has just as much to offer, is just as ideal for a perfect vacation, the rates are very materially lowered, as you will see from the enclosed folder. We are still catering, of course, to the same carefully selected group of people.

Here would be a good place to inject some effective sales copy about the "product." We pick on

LETTER PROBLEMS

“safety” because of the reputation most mountain hotels have for being firetraps:

One interesting point about Buckwood Inn is the solid cement and tile construction that makes it absolutely fire-proof. We are free completely from the fire menace associated with the usual country hotel.

A frank suggestion to take advantage of these low rates and the unusual facilities would be in order now, so:

With the three best months in the year ahead of you, why not plan now to come up here in the mountains and enjoy the finest vacation you’ve ever had . . . at probably the lowest cost?

Another argument to reach the ones who enjoy golf:

The golf course, one of the most widely known in America, is in excellent condition and the green fees are the lowest in history.

The close, because of the character of the hotel, can’t be too strong:

Your reservation or request for further information will, we assure you, receive immediate and interested attention.

Here’s the completed letter:

You’ll be agreeably surprised to learn how inexpensively you can now enjoy a vacation at one of the smartest, most exclusive mountain resorts in the East.

The rates at Buckwood Inn have always been commensurate with the character of its service, with the excellence of its food, with the unusual facilities for enjoyment.

Today, although Buckwood Inn has just as much to offer, is just as ideal for a perfect vacation, the rates are very

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materially lowered, as you will see from the enclosed folder. We are still catering, of course, to the same carefully selected group of people.

One interesting point about Buckwood Inn is the solid cement and tile construction that makes it absolutely fire-proof. We are free completely from the fire menace associated with the usual country hotel.

With the three best months in the year ahead of you, why not plan now to come up here in the mountains and enjoy the finest vacation you've ever had . . . at probably the lowest cost?

The golf course, one of the most widely known in America, is in excellent condition and the green fees are the lowest in history.

Your reservation or request for further information will, we assure you, receive immediate and interested attention.

Problem No. 3. A distributor for a nationally known refrigerator wants to line up some interested prospects for his salesmen to call on. The product, Electrolux, is unique in that it operates by gas instead of electricity, a very small flame producing the cold. Its construction is simple, yet sturdy; its operation is quiet and efficient; it is odorless.

Prospects are homeowners in the better sections, selected by canvassing and weeding out those who had recently bought another make of refrigerator.

The proposition *should* be appealing, because all that is required in order to have one of these gas refrigerators installed is a down payment of \$25.

In the start of the letter, let's cash in on the free publicity that has been given this latest scientific achievement:

You probably have read about or heard your neighbors discussing the new gas refrigerator — ELECTROLUX.

LETTER PROBLEMS

You may have already mentally formulated some opinion and perhaps compared it with other iceless refrigerators on the market.

Now comes the follow-through:

I'm writing you now because you can't possibly realize what a miracle of science Electrolux really is, until you've actually seen it and heard the details.

After this we proceed to give some of the details, some of the reasons why any woman would want such a refrigerator:

ELECTROLUX works on an entirely new, although proven principle. It has no more moving parts than your kitchen table; it makes no more sound than a vacuum bottle: it has no odor of any kind and it will endure like a steel safe . . . it costs less to own and operate than any other refrigerator in the world.

Some confidence building is needed next, because this is a comparatively new product and a new principle. Some people are going to feel it would be safer to wait until old Father Time has had a chance to give it a thorough trial. They might be influenced, however, by the fact that a good many other people have already bought and are satisfied. So:

Thousands are in use right now and, since establishing our new special Payment Plan, more people every day are modernizing their homes with this new freezing principle of producing cold with a tiny gas flame.

To answer a few more questions that might be in the prospect's mind, we inject the following

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paragraph, ending it with the story on the small down payment:

There are four lovely colors to harmonize with the color scheme in your kitchen, and of course many different sizes. But whatever your selection, only \$25 is necessary to put one right in your own home.

Then comes the close, which is of the second-gear variety — right to the point but not high pressure:

Put the enclosed card in the mail right now and let us at least tell you about it. No obligation.

Put together, the letter looks like this:

You probably have read about or heard your neighbors discussing the new gas refrigerator — ELECTROLUX.

You may have already mentally formulated some opinion and perhaps compared it with other iceless refrigerators on the market.

I'm writing to you now because you can't possibly realize what a miracle of science Electrolux really is, until you've actually seen it and heard the details.

ELECTROLUX works on an entirely new, although proven principle. It has no more moving parts than your kitchen table; it makes no more sound than a vacuum bottle; it has no odor of any kind and it will endure like a steel safe . . . it costs less to own and operate than any other refrigerator in the world.

Thousands are in use right now and, since establishing our new special Payment Plan, more people every day are modernizing their homes with this new freezing principle of producing cold with a tiny gas flame.

There are four lovely colors to harmonize with the color scheme in your kitchen, and of course many different sizes. But whatever your selection, only \$25 is necessary to put one right in your own home.

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Put the enclosed card in the mail right now and let us at least tell you about it. No obligation.

Problem No. 4. Our client is a distributor and refiner of lubricating oil, the kind used in automotive and Diesel engines. This particular letter is about an oil that was originally developed for Diesel, but is just as effective in automotive engines, and we are attempting to sell that idea to new car dealers. The feature of the oil is that it can withstand the higher working temperatures and pressures of the modern engine. And that, unlike other oils, it does not break down under these conditions and increase friction, deposit sludge, produce varnish, etc., etc. The letter is accompanied by a single page $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ circular which gives *proof* of efficiency. Since it is very obviously a circular letter, let's not go to the expense of a personal fill-in, but use a three-line heading instead:

We developed it for Diesels
— *here's proof that it's perfect*
also for gasoline engines!

With that as a starter, let's open up by saying:

If you're interested in superior performance for cars and trucks — and we mean really superior — you'll welcome this news with open arms.

Now we should start to build up the story telling what we have accomplished with Diesel lubricating oil. We have to establish that as being successful before switching over to the main story:

For years, we have been perfecting Bannerlube Diesel lubricating oil. It is being used successfully now all over

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the east and has conclusively demonstrated its ability to do a better lubricating job under the hardest possible conditions — *in a full compression engine.*

Here's where we swing over to the oil for gasoline engines, which is where the new car dealer comes in:

We figured that if it would do that, it would be a "walk-away" in a gasoline engine which just has a high compression head. It was!

Next step is to start building conviction, which we do by offering proof:

After many tests and comparisons, the most recent of which is related on the attached sheet "Proof of the Pudding," we are ready to furnish you with what one new car dealer says is "by far the most satisfactory oil we have used."

Now we start the selling job on the automotive oil:

Here is a modern oil — made expressly for modern engines which, due to high power output and small clearances, definitely require a lubricating oil that can withstand the higher working temperatures and pressures. Old-style oils break down under these conditions and increase friction, deposit sludge, produce varnish — which in turn sticks rings and valves, causes pistons to drag and reduces engine power and gasoline mileage.

Finally, we try to arouse interest in the attached folder which gives more complete information about these products, and at the same time make our bid for action:

You'll find the story of Bannerlube and the advantages of OILIER LUBRICATION in the enclosed folder. Won't you read it carefully and then let us come in and, without obligation,

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give you our recommendation — in terms of your own needs?

Thus we have another letter finished:

We developed it for Diesels
— *here's proof that it's perfect*
also for gasoline engines!

If you're interested in superior performance for cars and trucks — *and we mean really superior* — you'll welcome this news with open arms.

For years, we have been perfecting Bannerlube Diesel lubricating oil. It is being used successfully now all over the east and has conclusively demonstrated its ability to do a better lubricating job under the hardest possible conditions — in a full compression engine.

We figured that if it would do that, it would be a "walk-away" in a gasoline engine which just has a high compression head. It was!

After many tests and comparisons, the most recent of which is related on the attached sheet "Proof of the Pudding," we are ready to furnish you with what one new car dealer says is "by far the most satisfactory oil we have used."

Here is modern oil — made expressly for modern engines which, due to high power output and small clearances, definitely require a lubricating oil that can withstand the higher working temperatures and pressures. Old-style oils break down under these conditions and increase friction, deposit sludge, produce varnish — which in turn sticks rings and valves, causes pistons to drag and reduces engine power and gasoline mileage.

You'll find the story of Bannerlube and the advantages of OILIER LUBRICATION in the enclosed folder. Won't you read it carefully and then let us come in, and without obligation, give you our recommendation — in terms of your own needs?

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Problem No. 5. A manufacturer of furnace cement wants to reach the stove manufacturers who buy cement, not only for their own use but to include with every order for a stove. The facts are these: This cement we are to sell will give more coverage, will stand more heat, has more flexibility and will not harden in the package as many of the others on the market do. On top of all that, we can offer an extra discount to induce them to buy.

The prospects are buying another brand of furnace cement now and are apparently satisfied. Our only hope is to sell them on the idea that by buying ours they'll be getting a better product for a lower cost. That would seem to be a pretty good proposition.

We might open this attack by a point-blank, interest-arousing question:

Are you open for an unusually good "buy" in furnace cement?

Let's further the interest in the savings we're holding out before the reader by saying:

We are looking for firms who are willing to use a finer product in order to enjoy a substantial saving. Believe it or not, such firms will be getting the "cake and the penny" both.

We'd better prove it now by bringing in a few facts to build conviction:

They can buy with every assurance that I.B.M. asbestos furnace cement will give one-fifth more coverage than any similar product they have ever used; that it will stand more heat than iron. and retain positive bond to iron at extreme

LETTER PROBLEMS

temperatures; that it possesses unusual flexibility after setting; and that it won't harden in the package.

There are two parts to this argument, one stressing the "finer product" and the other — well, let's put it down:

Now for the SAVINGS. Note the low list prices on the enclosed postcard. From these you are entitled to the full jobber's discount, 50-5-30%.

But as a special inducement to order NOW, we will, for a limited time, allow an EXTRA TEN PER CENT! Furthermore, if you'd like to try out I.B.M. Asbestos Furnace Cement first, we'll send you a 3 pound sample free. Could anything be fairer?

We've supplied a real inducement to buy and proved to the prospect that he can feel perfectly comfortable about the quality. All we should need now is something to turn the interest we have aroused into some kind of action. How about a question like this:

Wouldn't it pay you to mail off the card today?

Put all these thoughts together and we have our letter:

Are you open for an unusually good "buy" in furnace cement?

We are looking for firms who are willing to use a finer product in order to enjoy a substantial saving. Believe it or not, such firms will be getting the "cake and the penny" both!

They can buy with every assurance that I.B.M. asbestos furnace cement will give one-fifth more coverage than any similar product they have ever used; that it will stand more heat than iron, and retain positive bond to iron at extreme temperatures; that it possesses unusual flexibility after setting; and that it won't harden in the package.

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

Now for the SAVINGS. Note the low list prices on the enclosed postcard. From these you are entitled to the full jobber's discount, 50-5-30%.

But as a special inducement to order NOW, we will, for a limited time, allow an EXTRA TEN PER CENT! Furthermore, if you'd like to try out I.B.M. Asbestos Furnace Cement first, we'll send you a 3 pound sample free. Could anything be fairer?

Wouldn't it pay you to mail off the card today?

Chapter VIII

POINTERS ON LETTERS TO DIFFERENT KINDS OF PROSPECTS

Letters to Executives

The word "executive" covers a lot of ground, because there are as many different kinds as there are different kinds of human beings. There are certain characteristics, however, that place an executive in a somewhat different prospect category from a professional man, for instance, or a homeowner, even though he may be also an executive. It is strange that you should have to write differently to men at home and the same men at their offices, but you do. The reason, of course, is that at home there are leisure and quiet. A man has time to read and is frequently glad to read anything that looks interesting enough or important enough to command attention.

At the office — well, that's a completely different story. Here, your letter, lying in a pile on the desk as your prospect starts through the morning mail, is faced with the stiffest kind of competition for attention. The main thing to keep in mind is: say what you want to say as briefly as you can and still do justice to it, then stop. Most busy men resent having their time (which they consider valuable, if no one else does) needlessly wasted.

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

Letters to this classification should, generally speaking, be on the "short" side. Granted that any letter, no matter what its subject or to what kind of prospect it is being sent, should be only *as long as is necessary to tell the story effectively*. Notice, I said, "generally speaking," There will be exceptions to this, as to all other rules.

Here is a good letter to executives:

Some of the very unusual products described in the enclosed folder will interest you tremendously . . . and others probably not at all.

With that in mind, it will pay you to read the folder rather carefully, for the products it tells about are all revolutionary in their amazing advantages.

Obviously, we couldn't begin to tell the complete story on any one product . . . all we could do was to present the highlights of each. And there's no point in sending you information you can't use.

If you are interested in increasing your maintenance efficiency and cutting down its cost, put some check marks in their proper places on the attached card and send it back by return mail.

Full information and prices on the products specified will be sent to you promptly. Send off the card today.

Letters to Dealers

By dealers, I mean the medium-size and smaller retail merchants. The heads of large metropolitan stores are really executives and should be treated accordingly. Small dealers, for the most part, are just plain folks. Pumping your letter full of high-brow English won't help you one bit. If you want to convince them that it is to their advantage to accept your proposition, you'll have to use simple

POINTERS ON LETTERS TO DIFFERENT PROSPECTS

language, simply expressed. That is the secret to successful letter writing to dealers. Your letters should be informal, sincere, *natural* — not patronizing in any sense of the word.

Your letters should not only be couched in the dealer's language, but written with his problems in mind. Anticipate his reaction to your proposition and answer his objections before they have a chance to formulate.

Don't set him up as an "easy mark" just because he lives in a small town or has a small store in the city. Give him credit for good sense, whether he actually has any or not.

Be interesting in any event, helpful if possible, but never "preachy."

All dealers are interested, primarily, in profit, turnover, repeat business, time saving, money saving, improved conditions and the like, not in facts about your product, except as they may be turned in some way into benefits or advantages to them.

The following letter to dealers keeps these things in mind. It's one of a regular monthly series:

100% profit! Sounds too good to be true, doesn't it?

But it is true of MYNOL DENTAL SPECIALTIES — because now you can get the maximum discount of 50% from the wholesale price on ALL your purchases!

Here's all you need do:

CONSOLIDATE YOUR PURCHASES — combine all those \$5 and \$10 orders into a single batch that totals \$50 — and we'll allow you 50% discount from the total wholesale price. You see, it costs almost as much to handle and ship a \$5 order as a \$50 order — and we're glad to pass on the

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savings in shipping cost to you, in the form of this extra discount.

It's easy enough to do — and you save time and trouble, as well as money.

You can boost your earnings *still more* by increasing turn-over — use your sales organization to cash in on the prestige and profitability of the MYNOL line. A few extra minutes on each call devoted to MYNOL products will send sales soaring. Be sure to have your salesmen read the MYNOL MARKETER every month — it's chockfull of selling slants and information to help them sell more of everything. Depend on it — this plan is thoroughly practical and we don't believe could fail to work if properly followed. Why not start right away to take advantage of these liberal discount terms?

P.S. The new "MYNOL MARKETER" will reach everyone of your salesmen within a few days.

Letters to Jobbers

Much of the story on dealers applies to jobbers, even though they are usually larger operators. Jobbers, or wholesalers, are not so much interested in the consumer angle of your proposition, except indirectly as their interests are affected by public demand or acceptance. They are more familiar with and interested in economic conditions, the trend of buying conditions, etc., than is the small retailer. They have hundreds and frequently thousands of items on their lists and therefore the attention that can be devoted to any one is necessarily limited. The motive used to get a jobber to push one particular item in his line must be unusually strong if the letter is to accomplish its purpose.

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Here's a good letter to jobbers which also contains a good idea:

We are gathering together, right now, some extremely helpful information about roof coatings, furnace cement, plastic cement and similar products that should help every jobber's salesman increase his volume.

May we send it to you and to your men each month as it comes out?

There is naturally a lot about coatings and cements that the average salesman couldn't be expected to know. To many of them one roof coating, for instance, is like any other — whereas actually there is a tremendous difference. The facts that we plan to present in these monthly Bulletins will enable your men to demonstrate that beyond the slightest doubt. We expect also to include from time to time money-making ideas for retailers . . . ideas that your men can use to decided advantage.

By the time our lists are complete, the first batch of facts will be ready to go out. Won't you, therefore, fill out the attached sheet promptly and put it in the mail back to us? We'll appreciate your cooperation.

Letters to Schools, Colleges, Etc.

No matter how much you break down the population into groups, they're still *people*, human beings with different likes and dislikes, different ambitions and problems, but nevertheless with many similarities. They are alike in *this* respect, for instance: they all respond more readily if approached by means of the letter formula.

In writing to schools and colleges, as in writing to any other specific group, be sure you start by arousing interest, follow up by creating desire, then

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build conviction by stating facts, giving proof where possible, then go after some kind of action. Remember, too, that the names of schools and colleges are easy to get. They therefore receive a lot of mail and because of that it is imperative that your letter contain a "stopper" in the first paragraph — something that will insure further reading — and then get right down to the business of *selling*.

Notice how both requirements are met in the following letter:

Would you mind a personal question? The answer is really none of our business, but is extremely important to you. Is your present refrigeration system entirely **SAFE**? And do you **KNOW** that it is?

If you are using old and obsolete equipment, you will, we feel sure, be interested in this announcement of the only perfected air conditioned refrigeration system on the market — Standard's patented, streamlined **UTILITY REFRIGERATOR**.

With such a box, all fear of the consequences of a breakdown would be eliminated for many years to come. Your refrigeration system would be not only safe, but the most efficient yet devised. Repairs, replacements and all of the many problems that are the constant companion of a worn out refrigerator would be solved as by magic. And, more important, you would be able to keep, in perfect condition, a greater quantity of food, in less space and for a longer period of time.

If you will return the enclosed request-for-information card, we shall be glad to show you how you can install a new Standard Conditioned-Air System, have all the advantages of perfect refrigeration and at the same time **SAVE MONEY**. Send off the card today while it's right before you.

Letters to Investors

Cautious people, these. Their names appear on the list because they are supposed to have money. And most folks with money are loath to toss it away without at least putting up a struggle. Your letters to this group should have, above all else, *believability*. The tendency is to take what you say with a "grain of salt" anyway. Even before the letter is started, the reader is on the defensive. You must keep this fact always in mind when attempting to sell anything to a list of so-called Investors. Be as disarming as you possibly can. Be sincere. Be convincing. See if you don't agree that this letter, a follow-up used to sell subscriptions to a weekly market bulletin, has the proper qualifications.

Suppose you had taken a trial subscription to TRENDOMETER MARKET BULLETINS at the time we wrote you about them, a few weeks ago.

A copy of one of the bulletins you would have received is enclosed, dated January 21st. Would you mind reading it now, in the light of what has actually happened to the Stocks and Commodities mentioned? You'll find it startlingly accurate.

Isn't it possible, if you'd had this TRENDOMETER BULLETIN and had followed its advice, that you might have saved many times the cost of a TRENDOMETER subscription for an entire year?

One thing you'll like about TRENDOMETER BULLETINS is the ease with which you can read them. No "wading through" is necessary. They're all "meat" — solid, substantial information with the trimmings left off.

You can read them in three minutes, grasp the message instantly, yet despite their briefness, following their

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advice might easily mean thousands of dollars to you in savings or increased revenue.

TRENDOMETER BULLETINS are written in such a way as to give the busy executive important and essential information about the TREND of the market, quickly and concisely.

I feel confident that after you have received them, even for a few weeks, you will benefit sufficiently to want to keep on receiving them indefinitely.

That's why I am glad to accept a trial subscription. I *know* that TRENDOMETER BULLETINS will *sell themselves*, if given the opportunity.

Why not let me send them to you for a few weeks, so that you can see how "different," how completely understandable and helpful they are. Then, if you decide that you want them to keep coming, as I feel confident you will, the \$3.00 you have spent can apply on the subscription price for six months or a year.

If your trial subscription comes in promptly, we will still include, without extra charge, the personal comments on the stocks you now own, provided they are included in the 200 issues which we regularly study.

This extra service is well worth having, so put your subscription in the mail today. No money need accompany your order.

Letters to Undertakers

This type of prospect is in business for the same reason that all other businessmen are — to make a satisfactory living. Hence he should be talked to in much the same vein, *i.e.*, in terms of new business, success, profit. Following is a letter used by a retail floor covering establishment to sell undertakers the idea of new rugs and carpets.

May we show you how important floor coverings are to the success of your business?

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Actually, you have only service to sell. It is the degree of smoothness, of nicety, with which you perform your delicate task that sends people to you for assistance in their bereavement.

The proper selection of rugs or carpets can give your establishment the atmosphere it should have — one of restfulness, comfort and quiet beauty.

Wear is an important factor, too, for if proper floor coverings will attract business, it is essential that constant use does not destroy the value of the investment.

Yes, floor coverings can very easily pay for themselves — in good-will and new business — but they must be the right kind.

Our new selection of Hardwick & Magee Company patterns and colorings is now complete. You can see them here, or if you prefer, call (telephone number) and we shall be glad to send an especially trained man to see you.

Letters to College Alumni

Don't ever get the idea that *these* are easy letters to write. A man is, we'll say, five years out of college. He dropped out of his Alumni Association two or three years ago for any one of a variety of reasons, has been written to numerous times since. How can you write to him now, in such a way as to get a check for renewal of membership? That's the problem and, in my opinion, there is only one way to solve it. Revive the *spirit of school loyalty that is so strong in the heart of every student and that never completely dies*. And use not one letter, but many — all hammering away on the same heart string. Here is the second in a series used by the General Alumni Society of the University of Pennsylvania:

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“In days of old as we are told
There lived a man named Ben;
A friend was he and *so are we*
To Pennsylvania Men.”

Remember that verse in our song to Ben Franklin? I like it because it seems to express the spirit of friendship and goodwill that exists throughout the entire Alumni Society. To me it's inspiring to think of Pennsylvania graduates all together, as one big, friendly family, with ties so strong they just can't be broken.

To me it's wonderful to keep alive the memory of the happiest years of our lives, to keep informed on what's going on around the old campus, to get first hand and accurate information on the University's Bicentennial, Founder's Day, Election of Alumni Trustees and other important events.

These are just a few of the many reasons why membership in the General Alumni Society has meant so much to me. They are the same reasons why I know you are going to keep *your* membership.

Your annual dues became payable on the first of this month. So that the Society can continue the grand work it's doing, won't you put your check in the mail promptly?

I am asking you personally, not just because the Society urgently needs the loyal support of every Alumnus, but because I'm sure you won't want to be out of touch with the many important activities of your own University, even for a single month.

Letters to Advertising Agencies

Being the head of one, this should be easy. Unfortunately, however, the fact only serves to highlight the obstacles to be surmounted. Advertising men are naturally supercritical when it comes to letters and other advertising material aimed in

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their direction. The tendency is to look on each letter, mailing piece or advertisement as a *specimen*, as the brain child of a competitor, as the embodiment of an idea, as a thought stimulator for some project of their own. In writing to advertising men, therefore, keep that in mind. Accept the challenge and make them, in spite of themselves, read your message for the interest it contains. Following closely the letter formula will help achieve that result. Here is an example:

May we send you, *free*, and without "strings," a copy of the latest edition of the Winston Universal "Graphic Dictionary"?

We should like to make it worth your while to listen, for not more than ten minutes, while we tell you how and why we can give you MORE for your printing dollar than you are receiving now. That frankly is the reason for this suggestion that you let us present you with one of our finest self-pronouncing dictionaries (1152 pages — size $5\frac{1}{2}'' \times 7\frac{7}{8}''$) in return for your courtesy.

From *your* standpoint, there is every reason why we should be doing some of your work.

In addition to the large printer's usual equipment, we can place at your service publisher's facilities and equipment that are not available in the normal printshop. Besides a wider range of equipment, our plant working *day and night*, throughout the entire year, enables us to make quicker delivery *without additional cost for overtime* — a very important point!

Certainly there can be no question about QUALITY for we've been doing fine work for more than 30 years — have plenty of specimens to prove it.

What do you say — a dictionary for a ten minute interview — a fair exchange? Put the card in the mail and tell us a convenient time.

Letters to the Medical and Dental Professions

At the present writing, the code of ethics of the average doctor and dentist (particularly the former) is unfavorable toward the subject of advertising. The feeling is not so strong as it once was, but with the old-line conservatives and even many of the newer generation it is still pretty much in evidence.

It is a good idea, therefore, in writing to these classes not to have your letter smack too much of advertising. Keep it on a dignified basis. Not stiff and formal, but not too informal either. Granted, doctors and dentists are human beings like all the rest of us and react to the same emotions, and that there are cases where you can afford to be almost facetious in talking to them. But, generally speaking, your letter will be more successful if it avoids extravagant claims, high-pressure salesmanship and anything bordering on familiarity.

Here is a letter to dentists which is dignified without being stilted:

Purely in the interest of greater satisfaction from your full denture patients, won't you do me a favor?

As a result of many contacts with professional men and laboratories, I feel safe in saying that more denture problems can be solved with Nuform Anteriors and Dr. French's Modified Posteriors, than with any other teeth made.

With them, you will be able to give your patients greater denture stability; you will be giving them teeth that can't get "out of mesh" when the dentures settle; you will be giving them maximum masticating efficiency; the utmost

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in comfort and all round satisfaction with considerably less wear and tear on the delicate tissues of the ridges.

The favor I want you to do is to — simply try them. I know that once you have used these finer teeth, and have experienced for yourself their superior qualities and exclusive features, you'll never want to use any other kind.

If you will fill in and return the enclosed business reply card, we shall be very glad to send you a full set of teeth for examination and comparison.

And here is a letter to doctors which is somewhat more persuasive but still within the bounds:

The purpose of this letter is to acquaint you with a product which I sincerely believe is worthy of an important place in your practice.

There's no need to remind you that Stout has long been recognized and prescribed for its undisputed health - and body-building qualities, but it is generally so expensive that its purchase is almost prohibitive for many persons who would greatly benefit by its use.

We have solved this problem by producing a Stout that is equal in every way to the finest imported kinds, yet which sells for half, or less than half, the price asked for Stouts produced abroad. Furthermore, Esslinger's has a really delicious taste, so different from the usual Stout flavor.

Esslinger's is a genuine Brown Stout, brewed in the traditional manner, and containing all the salutary properties that have caused the beverage to be used and recommended professionally for generations. It is made from the finest obtainable ingredients, and its purity is insured by absolutely sanitary conditions and exacting supervision. It is best served at temperatures of from 60° to 65°F.

Esslinger's Brown Stout, is available to you and your patients through our Vermont representatives, M. M. Farrell and Sons, Burlington, who will fill all orders promptly or supply any further information. Just phone Burlington 4100.

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Letters to Architects

These prospects are also professional men, but of a somewhat different type. It is extremely important to know something about the architect's business, his specialized relations with clients, manufacturers, contractors, etc. Letters to this group should be as personal looking as possible. Hoovenizing or a similar electric-typewriter process is a good investment. The next best thing, since individually typewritten letters are impractical for a large list, is a good, clean multigraphed letter with a fill-in that really matches.

Architects want facts. They'll "eat up" all the useful or helpful information you can give them. And they'll throw away all the purely self-centered letters they can get their hands on.

The following letter to architects "got across":

The enclosed folder should make you feel pretty confident of the future — for it contains the greatest building news in years!

Please read it carefully — so that you'll understand all the benefits *you* derive from CERTIFIED LUMBER STANDARDS.

These new STANDARDS or specifications for the proper use of lumber in home construction will eliminate "Jerry-built" competition for you and your suppliers. Naturally, we're behind the move 100% — and feel quite confident that you'll join us in this campaign to eliminate malpractices in the building industry.

CERTIFIED LUMBER STANDARDS were developed and approved by the Middle Atlantic Lumbermen's Association based on data supplied by the United States Forest Products Laboratory. Architects, financing agencies, and prospective home buyers are quickly learning the details and soon, no

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doubt, you'll be called upon to build a home according to these practical STANDARDS.

It looks as if we've found a practical way to boost the character and reputation of the building industry — and by thus increasing confidence in us, *increase building!*

Won't you cooperate — and let us know what you think of the plan?

Here is another, following the same rules, but of a different type:

The next time you're out in your car, look at the various banks, theatres, churches, industrial and public buildings that you pass and . . .

Notice particularly how many of them have been beautified with genuine Gold Leaf.

The building you are designing now . . . do you want for it prestige, dignity, refinement? The most effective way you can give it these qualities is to be generous in your use of HASTINGS XX DEEP 22½ KARAT GOLD LEAF.

Gold Leaf by all means, but "Hastings" particularly because of its extreme brilliance and unusual lasting qualities. For considerably over a full century, "Hastings" has been the finest Gold Leaf possible to make.

Letters to Women

Don't think for a minute that you can write to women in the same vein as to men. They represent a completely different kind of human being. If you have any business dealings with them, it will pay you to do a little serious "boning up" on the subject.

One thing that makes it difficult is that there are so many different varieties. Far be it from me to attempt to outline them, because in the first place I couldn't if I wanted to, and in the second

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place it wouldn't do any good if I could. What particular kind of woman buys your particular product . . . well, that's your problem, not mine. I can, however, point out a few general characteristics, good to keep in mind.

Women are more appreciative of beauty than men. Style, of course, means more to them. The appearance of anything — an automobile, home, piece of furniture, etc., will loom larger in the woman's mind than in her husband's. Women are frequently shrewd buyers. They influence the purchase of 75 per cent or more of all the goods that are bought. They like details and a lot of information; therefore they will read longer letters, as a rule, than men. They are infinitely more observant; therefore they are quick to see untidiness or poor processing. They are great day-dreamers; therefore an interestingly developed word picture will frequently get across with women when a man mightn't take the time to read it. Here's a letter to women that is intended merely to "whet the appetite."

Here's something you've NEVER heard of before — a FIXED PRICE laundry service!

Whether you do your own washing, have a laundress, or use some form of laundry service, this new practical plan should interest you because it will enable you to know your weekly costs ahead of time, to the exact penny!

Briefly, here's how it works: We contract to do *all of your laundry each week* — carefully and scientifically wash it, extract most of the moisture, shake out and fold each piece, neatly package and deliver everything to you promptly, all ready for ironing — for a fixed price (as low as 85 cents a

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week), depending not on the amount of laundry, but simply on the number of persons in your family.

No matter what your present method, here's an opportunity to have your washing done more conveniently, more efficiently — and at lower cost. Women who do their own laundry will particularly be interested in Elite's Fixed Price Damp-Dry service, because they can be rid of all the mess and bother, enjoy the advantage of scientific CONTROLLED WASHING, *and pay less for it than the weekly payment on an electric washer*, not to mention the cost of electricity, soap, and other materials.

Our routeman will be around soon to give you complete information and to answer any questions that might be in your mind. Look for him.

Letters to Mail-order Buyers

Perhaps we should widen this classification to include all letters that are sent out to get orders, as opposed to those whose mission it is to bring back inquiries, or those which are not expected to bring back anything at all (as letters that simply pave the way for a salesman). A letter whose job it is to get a prospect actually to commit himself either to an order on approval or to an advance payment in cash must obviously do a selling job from start to finish.

It can leave no questions unanswered, no doubts in the prospect's mind about the product, as to what it does, what it has done, how it works, what it looks like, who has used it or bought it, why it's better, why it's a good value and what it costs.

Be complete in your description but be interesting while you're doing it. The very fact that you have to cover so much ground usually necessitates

a long letter; the longer it is, the more care must be taken in carrying the reader logically through from one paragraph to the next. Much more necessary in this than in any other type of letter is the letter formula — *interest, desire, conviction and action*. The letter must have interest or its two, three or four pages of closely typewritten copy will not be read; it must create desire or you might as well be talking to a stone wall; it must carry conviction or the desire you've created will be left in mid-air; and it must cause action to be taken or you'll never obtain results from your efforts.

And even that isn't enough. There are certain basic principles of mail selling that *must* be adhered to if you are to enjoy maximum returns. As a matter of fact, there are eight of them, and here they are:

1. Have a product that is in demand by the type of people to whom the advertising is being mailed — and on which there's both a low delivery cost and a high mark-up to allow a decent profit with what are considered good mail-order returns.

2. Have the most attractive proposition possible — with regard to the product itself, the price and the selling plan (open account, free trial, approval, cash with order, etc.).

3. Have your advertising material (including the envelope) so appealing at first glance that those receiving it will *want* to read it.

4. Have the story told so truthfully, so sincerely and so convincingly that those reading it will want

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to possess the product or enjoy the benefits of the service.

5. Include an unqualified *guaranty* that your product or service will do all that is claimed for it.

6. Have a list that contains as nearly 100 per cent live prospects as it is possible to find.

7. Have all mailings tested before being sent to a large list, and then, if sent to a large list later, properly timed so as to be received on the most favorable day.

8. Have or build up such a reputation for fair dealing and good value that the reader of your message will have confidence in your firm.

Here's a good mail-order letter. See how closely it follows the letter formula.

This letter presents an opportunity to buy, *for less than any woman has ever paid*, the products of one of the smartest Beauty Salons in the east, one long established as a house noted for the excellence of its complexion requisites.

Frankly, I've wanted to do this for years because I felt sure that any woman with a normal desire to be more beautiful and lovelier to those about her, would jump at the chance to buy, by mail, the finest Beauty Accessories at *a big saving*.

Please keep in mind that every day, in the better Philadelphia Shops, smart women are buying these very products *and paying half again as much for them*. They're getting splendid value too, for the House of Richel has a proud reputation, the result of generations of service in the cause of feminine loveliness.

But let me tell you now about the perfectly enchanting new RICHEL CHARM CASE, a combination of essential preparations for complexion care and aids to beauty.

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1st — there's a 2 oz. jar of Richel Cleansing Cream, pure, light, easily melting and ideal for all types of skin.

2nd — a 2 oz. jar of Richel Tissue Cream, used to exhilarate the skin, strengthen the tissues, keep the profile youthful — you'll love its delightful softness.

3rd — a 4 oz. bottle of Richel Skin Tonic, for toning up and refreshing. Acts as an astringent, refining the pores and helping to fortify against dust and wind.

4th — $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. bottle of Richel Rose Tint, a tiny bit of which means flattering color for your cheeks even through the longest days.

5th — a large box of our most alluring Face Powder, and a dainty little puff. Your choice of shade, of course.

6th — a 4 oz. bottle of Richel Eye Lotion to use when eyes feel tired and old. Every woman feels the need some time every day for a mild, soothing antiseptic such as this.

7th — a $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. bottle of Richel Muscle Oil — a delight for women of any age, but particularly those past the twenties when time begins to argue with good looks.

Finally, a large package of soft, silken Face Tissues, a necessary accessory on every vanity.

Put them all together, smartly arranged in an exquisite gold box, and you've the Richel Charm Case, a marvelously complete and practical beauty kit.

The price? Much, much less than you've been thinking. Much less, too, than other women right now are paying in the stores. The regular retail price for the preparations in this assortment is \$5.75. My special price to you now is only \$3.95, a saving of almost two dollars. And that's for everything!

I'm so sure you'll like the Richel Charm Case that I'll be glad to send it to you, postpaid, entirely on approval. If you feel that you can part with it after you've seen it, simply send it back and don't pay for it.

If you do like it, as I know you will, then send me your check or money order for \$3.95 in full payment. And if you'll send me your approval order within a week, I will include,

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free, a small jar of Richel's famous Instant Loveliness, a rich, creamy Finishing Cream with truly remarkable qualities.

All in all, a real bargain, don't you agree? Why not then put your order in the mail TODAY and be sure of getting this extra aid to beauty?

Letters to Salesmen

There are a good many different kinds of salesmen and different occasions for writing them. All we can do here is to make a few general observations. Some of them will apply in your case, and some will not apply at all. Here they are anyway.

In writing letters from the "house" to salesmen in the field, don't make the mistake of turning on too much pep. Salesmen can get fed up with pep talks very quickly and you soon defeat your purpose.

Be helpful and interested and sympathetic. Be friendly and natural and human. Treat them as equals, as men you respect and like. Don't preach, don't be "high hat" and don't write just for the sake of "getting a letter off to the salesmen." Give them some worth-while information of some kind and give it as one man to another, not as sales manager to the hired help on the road. (Go ahead and laugh but a lot of letters read just that way.) Don't write too often unless you do have something important to say.

Give credit where credit is due — and do it wholeheartedly. If you have to scold a salesman, make him "take it and *like* it."

* * *

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There's another type of letter to salesmen that deserves some comment. I mean the letter from a manufacturer to the salesmen of his dealers or jobbers. These fellows are not on the manufacturer's pay roll and can't be treated as if they were.

They have not only that company's goods to sell, but the products of many other manufacturers as well. Their time and effort are necessarily divided among these various products. Some get a lot, some just a little, some none at all.

Manufacturers whose sales are dependent upon middlemen have a real educational job to do. Frequently a letter isn't the proper thing to use, a printed house organ in some form or other being a better solution to the problem.

Where letters are indicated, it's well to keep them comparatively short, make them helpful if possible, and write them from the salesman's viewpoint whenever this is practicable. The task of writing will be more difficult, but far more productive, if you'll put yourself in the salesman's place before beginning your letter and say, "In his place, how would I react to a letter of this kind?" The reason I said the job would be more difficult is that you may have to tear up three or four letters before you get one that stands up under the test.

Here's a letter to dealers' salesmen that should have interested them (and did) because it pointed the way to more sales:

"The next selection by the sextet will be—NUFORM INTERCHANGEABLE FACINGS;" the title of the enclosed folder, is not just an idle headline.

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The next selection by every dentist you call on, WILL be Nuform Interchangeable Facings if you point out the many advantages in using them. Here are teeth whose superiority is not even debatable, and any professional man or laboratory technician can easily prove that to his own satisfaction by comparison and test.

Your sales job is therefore greatly simplified. It isn't necessary to sell the Facings — just sell the idea of comparing Nuform Interchangeable Facings with ANY others on the market, point for point. *The facings will then sell themselves!* This new broadside is going out now to our entire selected list of dentists and should be followed up by a personal call as promptly as possible.

Letters to Farmers

The analysis of your prospect or customer list, recommended in Chapter I, will help you to break down the word "farmer" so that you know pretty definitely just what kind of chap you're writing to. The word obviously takes in a lot of territory. There are the large operators and the small near-city truck farmers. There are hog raisers and corn growers, poultrymen, cotton growers, fruit farmers, gentlemen-farmers and just farmers. Each represents a different type with different ideas, different background, different ambitions and different problems.

For the most part, however, the following observations will prove helpful: The farmer is a careful buyer, not at all anxious to part with his money. He doesn't react favorably to "fine language" but prefers and responds more quickly to plain, open, man-to-man talk. The *personal* note, if sincere, is effective in writing to him. He is very apt to shy

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away from high-pressure selling (as indeed most people are today); he wants to think the proposition over and decide in his own good time. It isn't enough to say "mail back the inquiry card today" — you must give a logical reason why it would be to his advantage to do so.

He is impressed more by the experience of real farmers, particularly those somewhere near him, than by statistics compiled by state or federal governments. He wants and must have full information about the product or service you expect him to buy. He'll read any reasonable amount of details you give him, if interestingly presented.

Finally, and this is true no matter what kind of prospect you have, but particularly true of the farmer, he will respond more readily if your argument is couched in terms of *benefit to him* than if it features your product, factory or methods.

Chapter IX

POINTERS ON SPECIFIC TYPES OF LETTERS

Letters Written to Get Inquiries

An inquiry is what makes the difference between a "suspect" and a "prospect." It is the first step in the selling of many different products and services. An inquiry is really just a nibble, a tug at the line, a dip of the bob — in other words, an expression of curiosity. Good inquiries in the business world are worth their weight in gold, for they constitute "live leads" and the percentage of them that can be turned into orders is frequently quite high. Notice that I said "*good* inquiries."

Therefore the problem of how to secure them, or how to secure more of them, is an important one. Broadly speaking, there are two ways to solicit inquiries by letter — a direct way and a roundabout way.

The Direct Way. The direct way attempts to arouse interest in the product or proposition so that the prospect will be impelled to send back a return card asking for further details. There are two serious mistakes that are frequently made in connection with this type of letter. One is to give too much information, so much that the recipient has no incentive to write back. He *thinks* he knows all

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about the product and will decide (most of the time unfavorably for you) on the strength of that information. The second mistake is not making any provision for return of the inquiry.

Here is a letter that was unsuccessful because it committed both crimes.

Did you know that you can purchase lining plates for your ball and tube mills for just half the price which you have been paying; which would last three times as long, give greater production, cut down your expenses by not having to close the plant as often for repairs? Wouldn't you consider giving such lining plates some consideration if they have all these essential qualifications?

We do manufacture such grinding plates and our foundry will be glad to convince you by offering you an eight months' extension to pay the last half of your invoice. Unless we really did manufacture liners of such merit, we could not begin to grant such terms.

Our foundry fully realizes that output depends upon the employed metal, the harder the surface, the better it will grind; the longer it will keep its shape; the lesser it will wear away; and that the lesser the friction the purer and greater will be the ground material. The lining plates manufactured by our works meet in every respect these essential conditions and are cast out of our NEO metal, a secret formula, with special extra-hard chilled working surfaces, Brinell hardness in the chilled parts 450 to 475.

All we ask is a sketch showing the weight, size, thickness, number of pieces, and our lining plates can be delivered to your mill one month from receipt of your order. We quote $5\frac{3}{4}\text{¢}$ a pound of 2000 pounds to the ton f.o.b. American docks, rail freight your account.

We are assuming all the risk for our liners and if they do not meet in every respect our foundry's guarantee, relative to the above mentioned conditions, you may send them back at our expense.

POINTERS ON SPECIFIC TYPES OF LETTERS

Why not take advantage of our unusual offer now and equip your plant with our liners? Trusting that you will give us the courtesy of a reply, we remain

Here is a letter that attempts to do nothing more than arouse interest, bring out a need for the product and supply the prospect with an incentive or motive for looking further:

It will be to your interest to test every table in your dining room for wobble and unsteadiness.

The old-fashioned makeshift method of steadying a table with a folded piece of paper or sliver of wood is not in keeping with the up-to-dateness of your club or with the trend of the times.

The new and *better* way is with "Adjusta" casters or glides. Put them in and say good-bye forever to all embarrassment, disorder and inconvenience that result so frequently from a wobbly table.

You may not have noticed it, but you probably have lost the good-will of some of your members — every club restaurant has — through the spilling of coffee, soup, gravy, etc. — accidents that are not your fault at all, but that of an unsteady table.

The investment required to equip your tables with "Adjustas" is small — the dividends, in more enjoyment and less annoyance for your members, will wipe out the cost in a very short time.

Use the card, please, to request prices and complete information.

The direct way of getting an inquiry is recommended where the inquiry can be followed by a personal call or where the sales argument is a comparatively simple one.

The Roundabout Way. This method is effective when the best approach is an appeal to curiosity

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

alone or where the sales presentation is so involved as to require the help of a booklet or other literature to "put the story across."

The so called "teaser" letter uses the roundabout way of getting an inquiry. The letter might not even mention the product or service being sold. For instance:

How would you like to cut your office overhead 40% without in any way sacrificing production?

We have developed a plan that I can guarantee will do just that.

If you will tell me a convenient time on the enclosed card, I shall be very glad to explain how — without obligating you in the least bit.

Wouldn't *you* send back the return card, if the letter seemed to come from a reliable company?

In writing this kind of letter, appealing to curiosity alone, be sure that you include a *motive* for replying; be sure you make your letter sound sincere and be sure you can properly satisfy the prospect's curiosity after you have aroused it.

The roundabout way is also used where the sales story is long and complicated, where graphs, charts, illustrations, testimonials, etc., are called for — in other words, where a booklet must be depended upon to do a large part of the selling.

The object of the letter in this case is not to sell the prospect on the product but *on the idea of writing for the booklet*. In preparing the booklet, it is wise to put into it information valuable to the prospect, so that it can be effectively merchandised.

POINTERS ON SPECIFIC TYPES OF LETTERS

The following letter (one of a series of follow-ups) aims at getting the prospect to write for the booklet, in the hope that the booklet story, in pictures and words, will be impressive and convincing enough to do a selling job.

A very attractive brochure, one that has captured a good deal of the charm of life at The Barclay, has just been completed.

May we send you a copy?

It shows some of the very beautiful suites that are available — from one or two rooms, incidentally, up to eight and eleven — also pictures, many of the public facilities that are yours when you make The Barclay your home.

There are many advantages to living at Philadelphia's newest and most distinctive apartment residence and we'd like very much for you to see them first hand.

If you will put the enclosed card in the mail, the brochure will be sent to you promptly — with no obligation, of course.

Whether the direct way or the roundabout way of soliciting inquiries is adopted — and which you use will depend, of course, upon the job to be done — it is usually advisable to follow up those who don't respond.

That means planning a definite campaign of letters, and I mean *really planning*. First set down, in the order of their importance, all the appeals that you can honestly say apply to the proposition. With them written down, you will be reasonably sure of not overlooking any. Plan your follow-up letters now so that you use *all* your ammunition, highlighting all the various features and benefits to be derived from the use of the product or service.

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The interval between mailings will be anywhere from a few days to a week or ten days in the beginning of the campaign, to possibly a month or longer between mailings later on.

As to the number of follow-ups to include in your campaign, send as many letters as you feel from past experience can be sent *profitably*. The selling price and the margin of profit will, of course, be important factors in setting up your plan. Generally speaking, the higher the price of the product or service, the greater can be the interval between mailings and the more mailings sent. Keep in mind when writing follow-up letters that the reason for the follow-up lies in the failure of the first letter to bring an inquiry. If you remember that, you will send out better and more effective follow-up letters, because you will realize that if the argument used in the first letter didn't produce the desired action, then certainly the same argument won't click in the second. Incidentally, in most cases, it is neither necessary nor advisable to make reference in your follow-ups to those letters which have gone before.

Letters Written to Answer Inquiries

You have the inquiry now. The question is how to answer it — how to turn it into a sale. There are a few fundamental rules that it will pay you to follow.

Make sure that the inquirer's name and address are spelled correctly in your answering letter. There is nothing I know of that can so effectively

POINTERS ON SPECIFIC TYPES OF LETTERS

start a well-written letter on its way to the waste-basket as garbling the salutation. Make the letter as personal looking as possible. If you are answering inquiries on such a large scale that individual typing is impractical, use electrically typewritten letters or good filled-in multigraphed letters. A sloppy-looking circular letter will dampen the prospect's interest.

Start your letter by thanking the prospect for his inquiry or in some way showing your appreciation for his request. This isn't essential but it does get your story off to a good start.

Tie in with the appeal you used in the original letter, which was successful in arousing his interest in the first place. You hit a vulnerable spot then — *hit it again*.

Be *complete* in your answer. Knock down all the objections that might arise in his mind. Anticipate all the doubts and satisfy them before they have a chance to cause trouble. Assume you know nothing about the product, and supply all the information that you yourself would want in order to make *you* buy.

Send the catalog, booklet or other printed literature along with your letter, *not under separate cover*. There are numerous duplex envelopes that will carry your letter first class and the other material third class, but all together.

If possible, size up the needs of your prospect and in your letter adapt your product or service to those needs. The same letter to every inquiry will not generally produce maximum returns.

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

Get your answering letter off the same day the inquiry is received. It doesn't pay to let a live lead cool off. Strike while the iron is hot. Here is an answer to an inquiry that did — and was successful.

Thanks very much for your answer to our ad for an exclusive distributor. We are glad to receive inquiries from men of your caliber, for this is really an out-of-the-ordinary opportunity.

The confidential handbook coming along with this letter will give you some of the Invader story, some of its background, history and growth. It also gives helpful and specific information on the selling of a high grade lubricant such as Invader, tells of five different ways in which a distributor can build business, even gives the answers to questions raised by so-called "tough customers."

But the news in this story right now is in a unique selling plan that will enable you to make in many cases *two profits*, the regular distributor's profit *and* the one that usually goes to the middleman.

By taking this method of securing new distributors, we have reduced our selling costs to a minimum, which puts us in a position to offer a very attractive franchise to the right kind of distributor.

Invader oil is a premium oil, a dependable oil with perfect balance, with unquestioned quality, with a reputation for unexcelled performance. It sells for 30 cents a quart, in which there is as much profit for you, considering the fact that there is less sales resistance, as in a 35 cent oil.

And particularly important — with Invader, practically every sale means a repeat customer. The business you build up will be *yours* and you can depend on its staying with you. That's why distributors find Invader so profitable to handle.

Are you the right man in your County, do you think, for this opportunity? If so, I suggest your filling in the enclosed information blank and sending it back without delay. We

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shall give it every consideration, you may be sure, and if your qualifications seem to fit in with our requirements, will probably send one of our executives down to see you to discuss details.

Thank you again for writing and we'll be glad to hear from you.

Letters to Follow Up Inquiries

How many to send? As many as you can mail and still make it pay. That might call for one or a dozen — or even more. Making follow-up letters pay depends primarily on two things, consistency and conviction.

Follow-up letters should be mailed at regular intervals, ranging from a day or two to a month or longer depending on the product or proposition. The higher the price of the product, by and large, the more follow-ups you can send, but the interval between them should be greater. That statement may require an explanation. In selling a piano, for instance, the margin of profit is large enough to permit of, say, twelve or more follow-up letters, the first three a week apart and the rest at intervals of a month.

In selling a low-priced specialty, on the other hand, the profit may be such that the use of more than two or three follow-ups would be questionable — and certainly the spark of interest originally aroused wouldn't survive an interval between mailings of more than a few days.

In writing this type of letter, keep these things in mind:

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If the prospect didn't respond to your first answer to his inquiry, the chances are he will not respond to the second if it tells him the same story. So, each follow-up letter should present the proposition from a different angle, stressing perhaps a different advantage for the prospect in your product.

Don't talk in generalities. Be specific in both claims and descriptive details.

Whatever your personal opinion of testimonials, bear in mind that, properly used, they have always been effective. My prediction is that they always will be. What experience someone else has had with your product is of the utmost importance to a prospective buyer. Notice how effectively the testimonials are used in this follow-up letter:

You have of course heard or read about Dr. French's Modified Posteriors . . . have you ever actually tried them? I wish you would, if only in the light of an experiment — not wanting to miss an opportunity to learn something which might be to your advantage and that of your patients. We know definitely now, what improvements they offer over the intercusping forms. We know that, more than any other teeth on the market, they increase denture stability, compensate for normal "settling" and overcome the effects of lateral thrust. And we know that an overwhelming majority of dentists who have tried them, like them, and are using them regularly in their practice.

One dentist wrote in, "I like Dr. French's Modified Posteriors very much. There is no biting of the cheek, also more tongue room. They are easier to set up, and there is no locking of cusps." Another said, "I find Dr. French's Modified Posteriors to be excellent in cases of poor ridge formation where ordinary anatomic cusps would tend to

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dislodge the dentures." We have scores of such letters — most of them highly enthusiastic.

If you haven't already received one of the new technic booklets on Dr. French's Modified Posteriors, use the enclosed card to request one. When we send it, we'll include a template at the same time, a segment of an eight inch sphere which you will find extremely useful in setting up the teeth. The technic, incidentally, is quite simple.

If you *have* received the booklet, why not order a few sets of Dr. French's Modified Posteriors from your dealer and use them on your next few cases?

When sending descriptive literature with your follow-ups, it is good practice to use the letter to create interest in the booklet or folder and let the printed piece, with its color, illustration, headlines and text matter, do the actual selling.

Don't feel that it is necessary in follow-up letters to make reference to those which have preceded it; and don't under any circumstances allow even the slightest hint of reproach to creep into your copy. I have seen letters that started out this way:

We have written you several times about our so-and-so and are wondering . . . etc., etc.

Don't you feel as though you are being "bawled out"?

When you have received all that you can from your list of inquiries, before you throw it into the discard, try one more letter, offering some special inducement to buy. This last squeeze might surprise you.

Letters to Present Customers

I don't care how old and threadbare the saying is, I must use it here: It costs less to *keep* a customer than to get a new one. Another favorite, and just as true: *Your* customer is the other fellow's prospect. Depend on it that there isn't a customer on your books who isn't being peppered all the time with advertising missiles from one or more of your competitors.

Admit then that an important part of your selling effort should be directed toward cementing relations with present customers.

What kind of letter should go to them? This is hard to tell without knowing what kind of business is concerned, but these points hold true in any event:

1. Letters should be fairly personal. Certainly you can afford to be personal with someone who buys from you.
2. They should go out at regular intervals and they should *keep going out* indefinitely. You can't ever stop working on customers to *keep them customers*.
3. They should do a selling job, strengthening the confidence the customer has in you and in your product or service.
4. They should be informative, educational or helpful, if possible, in order to justify reading.
5. They might (not necessarily *should*) ask the customer for names of friends or relatives who could also enjoy the advantages of the product.

Letters to Bring Back Old Customers

If you are in business, undoubtedly you have some inactive customers on your books. Do you know why they are inactive? Do you know why they stopped buying? I'll tell you.

Some have *passed away* to another world. Some have *moved away*, out of your field of operation. Some have been *wooded away* by a competitor. Some have been *scared away* by the discourteous treatment of one of your employees or by a tactless statement of one of your correspondents. Some have been *forced away*, by circumstances that make it economically necessary for them to buy on a cheaper basis than you sell.

The questions are, do you know *which* of these reasons applies to which customers and do you know which reason predominates? The more you know about this phase of your business, the fewer inactive customers you'll have.

Pointers on how to write to them? Again, it's hard to be very specific without knowing the business, but these thoughts might help:

1. Try to find out in which of the above classifications the customer belongs. If necessary, come right out and ask him.

2. Admit the possibility of grounds for complaint and offer to adjust it.

3. Do a reselling job on your product, service or proposition.

4. Offer some inducement, if necessary, for coming back into the fold.

5. Be as personal as you can and still keep your letter sincere.

More on the subject of regaining lost customers will be found in the correspondence section, see page 170.

Letters to Pave the Way for Salesman's Call

The object of a letter of this kind is to make the work of the salesman easier. Any man calling on "cold turkey" exclusively has a tough job. In nearly every case, the biggest percentage of people he calls on will not be interested and will tell him so in no uncertain terms. It's discouraging work.

In order to cut down the percentage of those not interested, many companies precede the calls of their men with one or more letters, so that the prospect will be at least partially sold when the salesman arrives.

In writing such letters, keep in mind that your letter doesn't have to stand entirely on its own feet. It is now part of a "doubles team" where teamwork is the order of the day.

A letter trying to do too much of the selling job can do more harm than good. Don't take away all the salesman's ammunition. Leave him enough at least to use in closing the sale.

Therein lies the secret to writing letters that pave the way for a salesman's call. Make them really pave the way; make them really tie in with his call; make them a *help* rather than a *hindrance*.

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The one big object of this type of letter is to put the prospect in a frame of mind in which he will (1) be willing or curious to see the salesman and hear what he has to say, (2) be glad to see the salesman or (3) be so doggone anxious to see him that he can't wait. The degree to which you attain these results is the yardstick for measuring the success of your efforts.

Letters to Follow Up Salesmen's Calls

The salesman, in this instance, has made the call. He didn't come away with an order; nor did he get a flat turndown. What can be done to sustain and increase the interest aroused by the salesman? Letters can do the job for you very nicely, if you use the right kind.

Talk with your salesmen and find out the main points of resistance that they run into. If there is just one — price, for instance — write your follow-up letters around that angle, proving to the prospect that your product or service is the least expensive by reason of its finer performance, better quality, etc. If there are several points of resistance, you might deliberately plan your series of follow-up letters around them.

Use "reason-why" copy if possible. Bring in all the *proof* you can lay your hands on to back up the claims made by your representative. Testimonials in this kind of letter are very often effective, if they are authentic and believable.

Remember, if the salesman with all the advantages of personal selling couldn't win over the

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

customer, it's a cinch you can't do it with wishy-washy letters. You *can* do it in many cases, however, with interesting, convincing letters that wear away resistance like drops of water on a stone.

Letters to Sell in between the Calls of Salesmen

This is frequently done over the salesman's signature. It is an excellent means of keeping in touch with customers and prospects who aren't important enough to justify continual personal contact at short intervals.

In some businesses, the best customers must be called on once a week. Certainly they require no letter writing in between. The potential or actual business of another group justifies personal calls perhaps once a month, but much good can be done with the right kind of letter sent at the halfway mark.

Such letters can be order seeking or of the keep-in-touch variety, depending on circumstances. In either case, they should keep the efforts of the salesman in mind and tie in with them, not compete with them.

If the letter seeks an order, be sure you give sufficient reason why the order should be forthcoming. And if the purpose is simply to keep in touch with the prospect or customer until the salesman gets around again, be sure you don't waste the man's time, or the salesman, when he turns up, may get a cool reception.

POINTERS ON SPECIFIC TYPES OF LETTERS

Don't just "get out a letter." If you can't make your message actually helpful, make it informative; if you can't do that but still have to write a letter, at least make it interesting. This type of letter, speaking generally, should be on the short side.

Letters to Get Testimonials

Surprising to say, many companies have no file marked "Testimonial Letters." They've never thought about it, never got around to it, or just didn't realize what a golden opportunity they were missing.

Right here, let me quote from a well-known authority, who in discussing testimonials wrote:

He is not a good letter writer who tries to tell the story himself when he could induce satisfied customers to help him tell it.

Testimonials are extremely valuable if only as a source of supply for sales ammunition. The way to get them, if an insufficient number of them come unsolicited, is to write for them.

Don't write a long letter — it isn't necessary — and don't fail to enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want the maximum number of returns. Here's the type:

I wonder if you'll be good enough to do me a small favor. It won't take you but a few minutes.

You have been using one of our so-and-sos for about a year now and I have every reason to believe you have been well pleased with it.

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

If that's true (and if it isn't, I want to know it), I would consider it a real kindness if you'd drop me a note telling just what your experiences have been — what kind of work it has done, how it has stood up, how the men in your plant like it, etc., etc.

Would you do that for me? I'll appreciate it a lot if you will and will surely reciprocate in some way if I can.

Self-addressed, stamped envelope is enclosed, and, if it would be any more convenient, just use the back of this sheet for your letter. Thanks again.

Chapter X

ANSWERS TO LETTER QUESTIONS

How Long Should a Letter Be?

As long as it takes to tell the story effectively. That may mean one paragraph or many pages. A good letter, like a good salesman, will deliver the message and then come to a graceful stop. As I see it, there can be no other general answer to the question. Some propositions can be outlined in a few words, others take hundreds, and the only way you can economize on them is by leaving out some essential or important part of the story, which good salesmanship will not permit you to do. Furthermore, it is perfectly possible to write a long letter and *get it read*, simply by following the fundamental rules outlined in previous chapters.

How Should a Letter Be Processed?

There are six commonly used ways to reproduce a letter. In the proper order, based on both cost and appearance, they would line up something like this:


HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

1. By typewriter, either hand or electrically operated (see Autocoaler letter).

AUTOCOALER, INC.

"COMBUSTIONEER" AUTOMATIC COAL BURNERS

J DICKINSON ESTE, PRES.



1608 WALNUT STREET
PHILADELPHIA PA

PHONE: KINGSLEY 2782

Beseman Coal Company,
American & Somerset Streets,
Philadelphia, Pa.

Gentlemen:

You've no doubt said many times that if you could only find a good automatic stoker at a price the mass public could afford to pay, you would be for it 100%.

The enclosed announcement describes just such a stoker and we, as distributors, are very anxious to have your cooperation in introducing it to the Philadelphia market.

"Combustioneer", priced within reach of practically everyone, is a completely automatic, electrically controlled burner for the small sizes of anthracite coal - Buckwheat and Rice. It comes in two sizes - one for homes up to 15 or 18 rooms and the other for large estates and buildings.

Autocoaler, Inc. will go the limit in making this equipment a profitable tie-up for your business. We'll pay you \$30. commission for each sale consummated by you and we'll be glad to send our own men out to help yours in closing sales - giving you \$5. for each exclusive lead resulting in a sale.

In addition, we will extend the offer (made by the Combustioneer Co. in Goshen, Ind., and which expired October 21st) to sell to any accredited Coal Dealer one Combustioneer for his home or office at our own cost price . . . \$155. plus \$7. freight, plus \$25. for installation - you to pick up the unit at the freight station, paying the sight draft of \$155. upon arrival.

At 1703 Sansom we have a "Combustioneer" in action, heating - more economically than it has ever been heated before, - the three-story building on that corner. Why not come down and see it?

Then if you'll come over to the office, right around the corner, you can see the unit on display and we can point out to you its unusual features.

I'll be very glad indeed to see you at any time.

Sincerely yours,
J. Dickinson Este

JDE:WM

ANSWERS TO LETTER QUESTIONS

2. Multigraphing with a filled-in salutation and signature reproduction (see Tartaglia letter).

Designers
CONRAD DITULLIO
FRANK LEMMO

Frank L. Tartaglia INC.

2033 Chestnut Street
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

Earle A. Buckley, Esq.,
1600 Arch Street,
Philadelphia, Pa.

Dear Mr. Buckley:

I am addressing this letter to men who care what they look like on a hot summer day.

And I know you DO.

- to men who want comfort but refuse to make an appearance in an ill-shapen, bag-like costume whose only claim to distinction is the fact that it's cool.

And I'm sure that applies to you, too.

For that reason, I'm hoping you'll be interested in a custom-tailored WHITE LINEN SUIT, in which I assure you, you will both look like a gentleman and feel like one.

It isn't necessary any longer to sacrifice comfort or appearance in order to get coolness, nor to sacrifice fine tailoring to get a reasonable price.

A suit of genuine Irish Liven, tailored only \$35. The material we use is the finest obtainable - it's pre-shrunk and you can depend on it to hold its shape thru thick and thin. You couldn't make a more satisfactory hot-weather investment!

Why not stop in this week so that you'll have it - all ready!

Respectfully,

Ferdinand Tartaglia

P.S. We also have a Vita-Cool for the same price.

TAILORS TO GENTLEMEN SINCE 1890

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

3. Multigraphing with a headline or fake fill-in (see Banner Oil letter).

BANNER OIL COMPANY

Motor and Diesel Engine Lubricating Oils

1500 PINE STREET • CAMDEN, N.J.

TELEPHONE: CAMDEN, 3563

M.H.S. is doing
MORE than we
claimed for it!

After we announced in July that we had developed the perfect oil for medium and high speed small bore Diesel Engines, several persons told us that the letter and folder made nice reading, but they wondered whether Bannerlube "M.H.S." could do all that we said it would.

We now report to you, based on actual experience, that it DOES - and then some!

With no exceptions, everyone who has used Bannerlube "M.H.S." Diesel Oil tells us that it is doing an amazing job of complete lubrication combined with efficient dispersing of dust, dirt, and carbon (which the filters must take out.)

Bannerlube "M.H.S." is the only Diesel Oil that prevents carbon troubles and at the same time reduces engine wear to an absolute minimum. This is lubrication at its best.

And these aren't all the features by a long shot, as you'll find out when you first try this specially perfected Diesel Oil.

Based on known results, we unqualifiedly guarantee that Bannerlube M.H.S. will prove more efficient in your medium and high speed small bore Diesel engines than any Diesel Oil you have ever used. And you won't be allowed to pay for it, if it doesn't.

If you are interested in better results and a lower cost of operation, why not accept that challenge and order a few drums for test and comparison?

Sincerely,

Charles P. Orr

Charles P. Orr

Bannerlube

ANSWERS TO LETTER QUESTIONS

4. Mimeographing (see Universal Dental Company letter).

CABLE ADDRESS
"UNIFORM" PHILADELPHIA
A B C CODE 97 EDITION



BROWN AT 487 STREET
PHILADELPHIA, U.S.A.

SUMMER SUGGESTION NO. 2

How would you like to make one extra tooth sale each call you make?

That sounds harder than it really is - you can do it on your next once-over of your territory if you'll tackle the job as a "must."

Here's a suggestion. First divide all your customers into two groups. . . .

If the dentist is already buying teeth from you - sell him an additional item in the line; go after a fill-in order; stress the features of the Inventory Control System, if he's not already using it; emphasize the benefits of a larger assortment; or suggest a better stock arrangement with some additional items.

If he is not buying teeth from you now. . . .

Concentrate on the five or ten drawer cabinet with Inventory Control System; or lead off with the new three drawer walnut cabinet; or feature the No. 360 assortment; talk about a box of Dr. French's Modified Posteriors as a means of "getting acquainted"; or suggest a few sets of Nuform or Universal Vulcanites or some Interchangeable Teeth as a means of getting the ball rolling.

Try out some of these practical ideas. You'll not only make a real profit, you'll also stir up plenty of valuable goodwill.

NB:MSR

UNIVERSAL DENTAL COMPANY

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

5. Printing, done with typewriter type on a regular printing press. This type of letter cannot be satisfactorily filled in (see Richel letter).

Richel

1727 WALNUT STREET

Dear Friend:

This, to my knowledge, is the first time beauty conscious women have ever been able to enjoy both home and salon beauty care in one neat little specially priced "package."

A GIFT OF 8 RICHEL BEAUTY REQUISITES - WORTH \$6.75

Yours - with our compliments - a Richel Glamour Case packed with full size samples of our choicest beauty aids! Eight beauty essentials, worth \$6.75 - and all you pay is the cost of the attractive jars and bottles and the big, golden case - only \$1.75.

Actually, the main purpose for this plan is to have you discover the pure delight to be found in using Richel Beauty Preparations - exquisite gems of loveliness that should be on every fastidious woman's vanity.

But I'm getting a little ahead of my story. The Richel Glamour Case is only part of our offer!

AN UP-TO-THE-MINUTE COIFFURE FOR YOU
AT THE RICHEL SALON!

We want you to discover the character our experts can give your hair. We want you to visit The Richel Salon for the rest of our unusual offer.

The new hair styles are delightful! They're practical as well as flattering. As you undoubtedly know, The Richel Salon is probably most famous for the alluring charm of coiffures created by our expert hair stylists.

Yours for charm,

Helen Richel

ANSWERS TO LETTER QUESTIONS

6. By reproduction of handwriting. This type of letter is reproduced through rubber plates on a multigraph, then personalized with a hand salutation (see F. A. North Co. letter).

F. A. NORTH COMPANY
1833 CHESTNUT STREET
PHILADELPHIA

REV. 5797

Dear Mr. Scherer:

You might be interested in knowing that I now have in the vicinity of North Philadelphia, a small sized Beckwith Pianos which you could take over for only \$12.75

Rather than bring this piano back to our main store, I would be perfectly willing to let you have it for this amount and give you terms of \$2.00 per week.

If after seeing the instrument, you decide to assume this small account, we will send one of our factory trained tuners to regulate the action, polish the case and deliver it to your home, giving you our regular guarantee for such an instrument. All you would pay would be \$12.75 in payments as small as \$2.00 per week.

Please sign and return the enclosed card, no postage necessary, and I will send detailed information and the telephone number, so that you can make an appointment to see the instrument at your convenience.

Please act promptly

Very truly yours,
G. D. Mc Clellan

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

7. Multigraphing, personalized. This is an ordinary multigraphed letter with handwritten personalization at the top. Can, of course, be done in any desired color. The body of the letter is multigraphed.

Mrs. Frank Burr

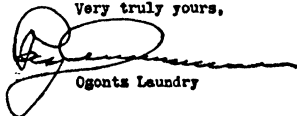
Have you heard about it - the "Budget-Bundle" Laundry service which is being so heartily welcomed by housewives?

For years, our laundry service has been recognized as the Quality Service of this section. Now, in order that all may enjoy better laundering, we are offering this super-service at a special price. Our "Budget-Bundle" is a complete laundry service of 17 pounds washed and ironed for only \$2.10, and only five cents a pound extra for wearing apparel.

If you have used Ogontz Laundry Service, you know what an unusual value this is. If you have not yet tried our super-fine service, here is an opportunity to do so at a worth-while saving.

Why not call our Miss Day now - Ogontz 3290, and let her give you full particulars? This will not obligate you in the least, and it can mean a definite answer to all your laundry problems.

Very truly yours,



Ogontz Laundry

OGONTZ LAUNDRY
WYNCOTE, PA.

ANSWERS TO LETTER QUESTIONS

The question as to which of these ways should be adopted for any particular letter campaign depends on the kind of product, on the size and character of the list, on the nature of the proposition, and on how important it is to carry out the illusion of a personal letter.

In some cases, it is highly essential that the prospect be made to think that the letter he is receiving is a strictly personal one. Sometimes the use of a personal letter is a mark of business courtesy that the prospect (the president of a large corporation, for instance) would have a right to expect. In both instances, an individually typewritten or electrically typewritten letter should be used.

There are many other situations where you have no desire to "kid" the prospect into thinking that he is the only one receiving your letter, but where your own pride demands that your letter live up to a high standard of appearance. Also, there are many cases where you want a personalized effect but the size of the list or the expense budget will not justify either typewriting or mechanical processing. In both such situations, the right answer is a multigraphed letter with carefully filled-in salutation.

Next in the scale is the same multigraphed letter without the fill-in — left out primarily because the proposition will not stand the cost; then come mimeographing and printing at still lower cost.

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

A fairly safe rule to follow is: the higher the type of list and the more expensive the product or service, the more necessary it is to approach as closely as possible a personally typewritten letter.

Do Filled-in Letters Pay?

They do, providing they produce for you a more profitable percentage of returns than the same letter not filled in. Divide your list into two sections; send filled-in letters to half and unfilled-in letters to the other half. The result will give you the only accurate answer to the question.

What Kind of Postage Should Be Used?

In answering, I shall have to call again on my good friend, General Lee Speaking, because nothing but a general answer to the question can be given. Usually, the advantage in first-class mail depends upon the unit of sale. It is recommended for letters to comparatively small lists, when the product or service is high-priced. It is *not* recommended as having any advantage in pulling power for letters to very large lists when low-priced products or services are being sold.

Those sending letters about medium-priced products to small and medium-size lists will have to experiment and find out for themselves which type of postage, first or third, produces the most profitable returns.

You will find all kinds of conflicting opinions on the subject. One man will tell you he never even opens the envelope of a third-class letter.

ANSWERS TO LETTER QUESTIONS

Another will tell you that he opens all envelopes anyway so that the postage couldn't make any difference. A third will give you the result of a test showing that first-class postage outpulled third class by one and a half to one. And a fourth will tell you about a test *he* made in which he got just as many returns with third-class postage as with first, at of course a very much lower cost.

Naturally, there is a slight psychological advantage in favor of first-class postage. The question is whether the advantage, as reflected in actual results, is great enough to warrant the extra cost.

The only way to find out is to make a test. Don't, however, make the mistake of dividing the list in half and using first-class postage on one group and third-class on the other. That wouldn't be fair because the cost of mailing in one case is much less than the other. Spend the same amount of money on each side.

Be sure also that everything else is equal. The letter inside the envelope should be the same in every detail. In using third-class postage, it is well to remember that many companies employ mail clerks, who open and distribute all letters regardless of postage. For that reason, since the reader might not know what kind of postage was used, favorable action will often depend on the impression made by the letterhead, the mechanical appearance of the letter, the interest aroused by the first paragraph, the desire created by the following paragraphs, the motive that is employed,

and all the other essential requirements. So, regardless of postage used, don't neglect any of them if you want your letter to enjoy maximum returns.

What about Return Postage?

This is a much disputed question and one that must be answered individually for each person. What has been said about testing the use of first- and third-class postage applies also to the various methods that are available for encouraging an inquiry or order.

Whether to enclose a business-reply envelope with a permit, an addressed envelope with a stamp on it, a business-reply card with permit, a government postal card or a private mailing card for the prospect to stamp, or none at all depends entirely on circumstances and can be determined with accuracy only by a test.

I can be definite on one point, at least: *making it easy and convenient for the prospect to reply is one of the fundamentals of mail selling.* Which method will give you best results is a matter of experiment, but you need no experimenting to know that *one* of those methods is better than none. You are almost certain to get more inquiries or orders back if you provide the means; from my experience anyway, you should receive enough more to make the return card or envelope a profitable investment. You will probably get a higher percentage of returns if you pay the postage, but when you do that the quality of the inquiries

has to be taken into consideration; therefore I say again — to be on the safe side, *make a test.*

Are Postscripts Good or Bad?

In routine correspondence, I agree with Lawrence Lockley, author of "Principles of Effective Letter Writing," that they should be unnecessary.

In sales letters, on the other hand, they can be used with telling effect. Frequently letters are scanned hurriedly, not digested carefully as we intended and hoped when we wrote them. If there is a postscript, however, it may serve to arouse enough interest so that the reader will go back and give the letter another chance. Thus, a skillfully worded postscript *might* mean the difference between success and failure. Now don't go and put one on every letter. Use the postscript as you would any of the many other tools and tricks of letter writing — only when it seems to fit in with the scheme of things.

Here are some P.S.'s that were effectively used:

P.S. If you send off your six months' or year's subscription by return mail, you may deduct the \$3 already paid, making the price only \$27 for six months or \$47 for a full year.

* * *

P.S. Housewives tell us that a glass of milk during the morning and again in the afternoon makes a lot of difference in the way they feel at night.

* * *

P.S. You've probably spent enough money on moth preventatives alone to pay the small service fee for Elite "Clothes Parking."

* * *

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

P.S. Remember — Esslinger's Beer is also available in 12 ounce cans trade-marked "Keglined." And don't forget Esslinger's Little Man Ale in the new tall green bottles.

* * *

P.S. For super mileage, ask to see the amazing new Pennsylvania RX, the tire with feather-bed resiliency, compression tread, noiseless riding, and permanent white walls.

* * *

P.S. It'll soon be time to have your heater cleaned. *We'll do it for you for only \$2.40.*

* * *

P.S. We still say that our prices are no higher than you'd pay for a good ready-made.

How Should Letters Be Signed?

A letter should be signed with an individual signature, if practical, otherwise with a facsimile signature that *looks* like an individual signature. The more the letter resembles an individually typewritten letter, the more necessary it is to carry out the illusion of a personal letter by an actual signature or clever machine reproduction. Real progress has been made in the past few years in signature cuts for the multigraph, and those being turned out now are giving excellent results.

In a multigraphed, filled-in letter, the signature should likewise be as personal looking as possible, not for the purpose of deception, but to make the letter look more important and more interesting. The appearance of a letter and the way it is individualized to look like a worth-while message

have a lot to do with the prospect's decision as to whether to read the letter and see what it's all about or toss it aside and go on to the next.

How about Enclosures?

Many times the subject of a letter is such that, properly to convey data concerning the product or proposition, it is necessary to resort to an enclosure. Usually, this takes the form of a small booklet or folder, sometimes a single-sheet circular. The enclosure is frequently an important factor in the success of the letter, particularly when it relieves the letter of the necessity for giving technical details, prices, sizes and similar information.

Such literature, while used to supplement the letter, should be able to stand on its own feet when separated from it. Letters are often thrown away and the enclosure kept for future reference.

When it is being enclosed, the folder or "stuffer," as it is sometimes called, should be so placed in the fold of the letter that it comes out with it. If it is put in the envelope as a separate piece, the folder might easily be left behind unnoticed.

One other point about enclosures — don't have too many of them. "The more the merrier" doesn't apply to the pieces that go into an envelope. As you divide attention, you lessen interest. A good enclosure will help the letter put across its message. Too many enclosures will ruin everything.

When Is the Best Time to Mail?

The best days for a prospect to receive mail are Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Friday isn't quite so good, but it is better than Monday or Saturday. Monday, because of the holiday preceding it, is usually a busy day for most people and therefore on that day they are less apt to consider propositions received through the mail.

Saturday is at least a half holiday and many take the entire day off even in winter. In any event, it too is a busy day and therefore a poor one on which to attempt to sell by mail.

It shouldn't be necessary to point out that Christmas, New Year's and other national holidays are good days to stay away from when it comes to mailing *order-* or *inquiry-*seeking material. Give such times of the year a wide berth.

What Kind of Returns to Expect?

Obviously there could be no specific answer to this question. The number of orders or inquiries you receive depends on many things — the worthwhileness of the product, the acceptability of the proposition, the believability of the story, the quality of the list, etc. You can see why it is impossible to *predict* with any degree of accuracy what any given mailing will do.

You will know for sure what returns to expect about two weeks after a test mailing has gone out. Before that you can only guess, although with experience you can quite easily arrive at a *reasonable expectation*.

ANSWERS TO LETTER QUESTIONS

If you are attempting to get orders by mail you should figure out what return you *must* get, to pay for the mailing, plus the cost of filling the orders. This is called the "required pull" and only by knowing it can you determine whether or not you are earning a profit.

It isn't hard to determine the "required pull." If your selling material in the mail costs \$30 per thousand — and that is an average cost — your unit of sale is \$4, the cost of your product delivered is \$1, then your required pull is 1 per cent. (If the mailing costs are higher or lower, this percentage will vary accordingly.)

Here's the explanation: 1 per cent of 1,000 is 10 orders — 10 orders at \$3 net (\$4 sale price less \$1 cost) equals \$30 — the cost of the mailing. Therefore, in this case, 1 per cent is the return needed to pay expenses, and anything over that would be profit.

Arriving at a *reasonable expectation* is more difficult, but with experience you get to a point where you can guess pretty well as to the returns you have a right to expect.

If you are seeking inquiries, the return will, of course, vary with the attractiveness of the proposition. If you are *giving away something* that has any tangible value, naturally you will receive a much higher percentage of returns than if you are after requests for a representative to call. In the former case, as high as 50 to 75 per cent returns have been received, whereas in the latter instance, the mailing

could easily prove profitable on the basis of a fraction of 1 per cent.

If a great deal depends on the *number* of inquiries you receive from a given mailing, the safest plan to follow is to TEST, then you'll know ahead of time approximately what to expect. Read carefully the next chapter On Testing.

Chapter XI

ON TESTING

Before the Letter Goes Out

Do you remember, some years back, when your mother used to give you a very careful "once-over" before sending you off to school? Neck and ears clean? Hands and face washed? Hair combed? Clothes in order? Have you got your books?

Well, it's that kind of "once-over" that is meant by *testing before the letter goes out*. How about *its* neck and ears? Rest easy, I won't carry the analogy any farther. However, there are just as many questions you must ask about the letter you have prepared. In an earlier chapter, I suggested that you read it aloud and see how it sounds. That is a mighty good test and one that will uncover many weak spots. But there are a lot of other things to take into consideration before the letter goes out.

How does it *look* when set up on your letterhead all ready to go? Impressive? Interesting? Attractive? Important? Personal?

Is it addressed to the *right person*? Writing to the purchasing agent, when the plant superintendent is really the man, will keep returns down to a minimum.

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Are you using an up-to-date list? Are you reasonably sure that the names on it are those of people who *need* and should *want* what you have to offer and can *afford* to buy it?

Is it going out at the *right time*? Monday and Saturday are usually poor days for your letter to arrive. Wednesday is the best day, Thursday the next, Tuesday and Friday after that. Also how about the *time of year*?

The opening paragraph — does it act like a stop signal? Is it interest creating? Does it make you want to read more?

Is your proposition a good one? Would *you* be interested in it if you were “on the other side of the fence”?

Have you told about it convincingly? Has your story “believability”? Does it sound sincere? Have you given the prospect a motive for doing what you want him to do?

Did you make the right kind of bid for action? Did you give a *reason* for acting? Have you made it easy and convenient for the prospect or customer to reply?

Have you followed the letter formula and adhered to its requirements? It's easy to check up and find out. If you are using enclosures of any kind, are they being put into the envelopes in such a way that they are sure to come out with the letter?

Finally, have you given your letter to someone else to read in order to get an outside slant on your efforts?

A thorough analysis of all the various elements that can influence the success or failure of your letter will prove a really worth-while investment.

Testing after the Letter Goes Out

No, it isn't too late to test after your letter has gone, that is, if your mailing is deliberately sent out as a test. If you "shoot the whole works" and take a chance, it's too late then, of course, but certainly you wouldn't do that if it were at all practicable to make some profitable experiments first.

The average portion of a list to be tested is around 10 per cent. If the ultimate mailing is to 50,000 names, for instance, it would be decidedly in order to use 5,000 of them as laboratory "guinea pigs." If the list is 1,000, it is sound practice to mail first to 100. Approximately the same percentage of inquiries or orders that is received by the test mailing will be received by the big mailing, all factors being equal.

If you use only the best names for your test, your general mailing will naturally show a smaller percentage. Let the test list be a fair cross section of the whole. If you test at a good time of the month or year and send out the general mailing at an unfavorable time, your results will not be an accurate measuring stick for your letter.

Such observations may be elementary, but they are good points to remember. Sometimes the elementary facts of life are the ones we forget first.

HOW TO WRITE BETTER BUSINESS LETTERS

The test itself will vary with the circumstances. In some cases, when the mailing consists of a letter, folder and return card, it is necessary to write three or more letters, three or more folders and three or more return cards, and send them out in different combinations. Letter No. 1 with folder No. 2 and card No. 3. Letter No. 2 with folder No. 3 and card No. 1. Letter No. 3 with folder No. 1 and card No. 2.

When you are through, an analysis of returns will show you which is the best letter, which the best folder and which the best card. A general mailing, using the best of each, should and usually does produce a percentage in excess of that obtained by any of the test mailings. This method of testing is employed by one of the largest mail-selling houses in the country.

In other cases, it is important to test the various elements that make up the letter itself — the opening paragraph, closing paragraph, type of processing (typewriting, multigraphing, printing, etc.), signature, etc. The purpose here, of course, is to find out the relative importance *on results* of each part of the letter.

The way to do it is to send the original letter out to one list; to another section of the list the same letter in every respect except for the opening paragraph; to another similar group the same letter with a different close, etc. When the returns are analyzed, it is a comparatively easy matter to see what combination of elements should be used in the general mailing.

ON TESTING

Such testing requires patience, *but it pays*.

A third method of testing is the simplest of all. You merely send out your letter to a cross section of the list and check results. If they aren't satisfactory based on past experience, you try another appeal and keep trying until you feel that you have exhausted the possibilities — and even then you keep trying.

Chapter XII

LETTER DON'TS

DON'T address your letter to a company if you can possibly get the name of the proper individual. For one thing, more of your letters will get to their ultimate destination, *i.e.*, the person in the company most interested; for another, you can make your letter more personal.

Don't use mouse gray as a color for your letter-head or return envelope. Yellow, buff or cherry will stand out much better.

Don't send out letters "any old time." Select the time for your mailing carefully and wisely, taking into consideration all the various factors.

Don't use a small, insignificant order blank. Not giving a prospect enough space in which to write usually makes him mad. And, speaking of order blanks, it is said that a novelty form works better than a commonplace one.

Don't have your letter, order blank and return envelope all the same color. Contrasting colors for some reason bring back more orders.

Don't insist on the prospect's printing his name and address. Some people don't like to print and this gives them a chance to put off replying.

Don't let your prospect hesitate about doing what you want him to do. Make your request for action sound urgent!

LETTER DON'TS

Don't use a flimsy return envelope. A lot of people are reluctant to send money through the mails anyway.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that details aren't important. The little things about a letter put together constitute the letter itself and every one of them, like the separate parts of an automobile, is essential to proper functioning.

Don't forget to study, learn by heart and follow closely the letter formula.

Chapter XIII

ILLUSTRATED LETTERS

THERE are certain situations wherein the plain all-type letter isn't strong enough, by itself, to carry the load.

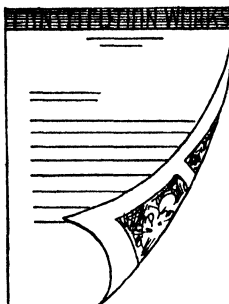
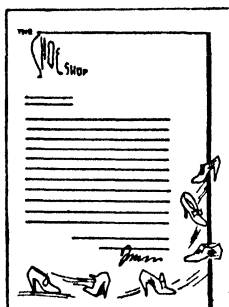
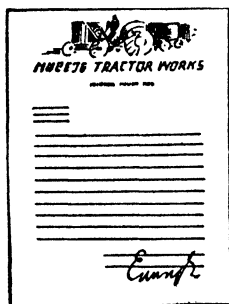
In such instances there are two generally accepted solutions. One is to enclose with the letter a folder, circular or stuffer of some kind and use that for the pictorial and descriptive part of the story.

The other and many times preferable way is use of the illustrated letter, which has several advantages over its competitor, the stuffer. It can't become separated from the letter. It can't be forgotten in the mailing process, as can the separate enclosure, and it isn't so easily misplaced or lost in filing.

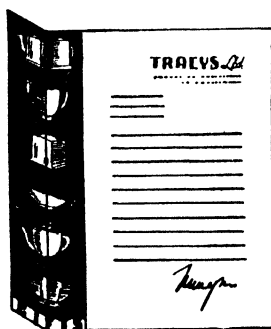
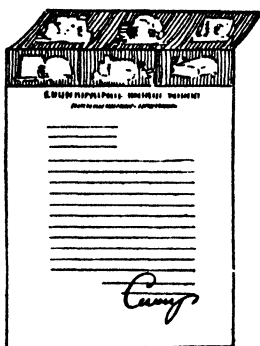
Once you've decided that the message calls for illustration and display, the next step is to decide which type of illustrated letter to adopt as the vehicle.

You can inject illustration at the top, bottom, side or back of your regular letterhead, whether 8½ by 11, Monarch or baronial size.

ILLUSTRATED LETTERS



You can put a flap at the top or side of your present letterhead and use that for pictures and detailed information.



You can take a standard 8½-by-11 sheet, for instance, fold it once sideways to 6½ by 8½,

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have your letter in the inside $6\frac{1}{2}$ -by- $8\frac{1}{2}$ space and use the other space, two sides, for pictures and copy; folded once more, it will fit into an envelope 7 by $4\frac{1}{2}$.



You can take a somewhat larger sheet, say 17 by $8\frac{1}{2}$, fold it down to $8\frac{1}{2}$ by 11 with the 6-inch flap extending from the top. That, counting both sides, will give you 102 square inches of space for the printed section. You can do a lot of explaining and illustrating in an area like that.



Or, you can use the regular four-page letter, 17 by 11, folding to $8\frac{1}{2}$ by 11, with the letter on page one, copy and illustrations on pages two and three, and whatever you want or nothing on page four. Frequently the back page of a four-

page letter is left blank so that, when it is folded to go in a number 9 or 10 envelope, no printing meets the eye to lead the prospect to begin reading at the wrong place.

This four-page letter can, of course, be in any size, although the usual sizes of the flat sheets are 17 by 11, folding to $8\frac{1}{2}$ by 11; $15\frac{1}{2}$ by $10\frac{1}{2}$, folding to $7\frac{3}{4}$ by $10\frac{1}{2}$; and $8\frac{1}{2}$ by 11, folding to $5\frac{1}{2}$ by $8\frac{1}{2}$. All of these may be cut economically out of the standard grades of paper.

Incidentally, there is a wide selection when it comes to choosing the stock for the job. You can use a bond, if there are no half tones among your illustrations; you can select from dozens of antiques and offset papers, and, by using offset lithography, reproduce any kind of illustration, including photographs and wash drawings. You can get papers that are bond on one side for your letter, and coated on the other side for your printed matter and cuts; others are colored and coated on both sides, but in different colors.

Certainly there is no excuse for not finding a vehicle for your message that exactly suits it, one that is appropriate from every standpoint.

The size, shape and color scheme naturally will depend on the character of the product, the kind of proposition, and the type of prospect. The proper selection is a challenge to your skill and judgment and should be made only after an extremely careful study of all the elements involved.

Chapter XIV

Dictated Letters

WE COME now to everyday, routine correspondence — the dozens and, in many offices, hundreds of letters that are dictated every day. These letters are a tremendous factor in the building (or tearing down) of sales and good will. If there is any doubt in your mind about the importance of this subject, give a thought to the amount of money spent annually by the average-size company in the answering of its routine mail.

Figuring the dictator's time, stenographer's time, filing, stationery, postage, etc., the cost of a dictated letter ranges from 35 to 75 cents — an average of 50 cents a letter. There are approximately 300 working days in the year. To find the approximate annual cost of your correspondence, therefore, multiply the number of letters sent out each day by 300 and then by 50 cents.

For example:

25 letters a day cost	\$ 3,750 a year
50 letters a day cost	7,500 a year
75 letters a day cost	11,250 a year
100 letters a day cost	15,000 a year
150 letters a day cost	22,500 a year
200 letters a day cost	30,000 a year
250 letters a day cost	37,500 a year

DICTATED LETTERS

300 letters a day cost \$45,000 a year

350 letters a day cost 52,500 a year

Correspondence is one of the most important forms of advertising. It makes friends — or breaks them. It builds up — or tears down. It creates the right impression of your house — or the wrong one.

For that reason *every letter, regardless of its purpose, should be a sales letter — whether it goes to one person or many — whether dictated or painstakingly composed.* More firms are realizing this every day, and the tendency is decidedly in the direction of friendlier and more “modern” letters.

Down through the ages has come a certain feeling of casualness toward the dictated letter. The procedure many times is to call in a stenographer. “Miss So-and-so, take a letter . . . ”

Smith, Jones and Smith

So-and-so St.

New York, N. Y.

Gentlemen:

We beg to acknowledge your inquiry of even date and can quote you \$6.00 per dozen, f.o.b. our platform. Terms 2% — 10 days, net — 60.

Trusting this is the information you desire, and thanking you for past favors, we remain,

That goes on hour after hour, almost mechanically, and certainly without the slightest thought for the *effect* of these letters on those who ultimately receive them. The all-consuming idea is to get through with the day’s dictation so as to

make room for "more important work" — as if there *was any* more important than the molding of favorable opinion in the minds of customers and prospects.

The routine letters that go out of your office every day — letters answering inquiries, adjusting complaints, acknowledging orders, asking for money, etc. — are losing a golden opportunity if they don't do *more* than they set out to do.

It might be the "job" of a letter to acknowledge an order. It should do more than that. Just by the tone, the language and attitude it adopts, it can unconsciously convey to the mind of your customer or prospect a conviction that yours is a substantial, reliable, friendly house — and that feeling invariably results in increased business.

This chapter on "Dictated Letters" has been divided into twenty-two separate discussions, around the following topics:

1. Cleaning house.
2. Making words count.
3. Opening sentences.
4. Closing sentences.
5. The right tone.
6. Making letters friendly.
7. How to make every letter a sales letter.
8. Making your answer complete.
9. How to write an adjustment letter.
10. How to write an inquiry letter.
11. How to write collection letters.
12. How to revive inactive customers.
13. The importance of physical appearance.

Dictated Letters

14. Letter uses.
15. How to avoid "telegraphic" letters.
16. The danger in long sentences.
17. About contractions.
18. How long should a letter be?
19. Your stenographer.
20. The form-letter system.
21. Mechanical qualities.
22. Psychological qualities.

Topic No. 1. Cleaning House

There is only one good place to start a discussion on the writing of better letters . . . and that's at the very beginning. Let's first clean house before attempting to refurnish with new thoughts and ideas.

There are certain expressions used in letters which invariably act as a brake on the good intentions of the writer. When they creep in, all friendliness and naturalness and spontaneity slide out. Where a positive or favorable impression might be made, a colorless or negative impression is made. Nothing hinders the chances of an otherwise good letter so much as cut-and-dried-ness. Hackneyed words and expressions sap the very life from the message. Thus we start along the road to making every letter a real sales letter.

Below are a few of the many meaningless "favorites" that clutter up business correspondence; after each is given a suggested revision:

We beg to acknowledge receipt of your favor of the 15th instant.

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Thank you for your letter of the 15th.

* * *

This will acknowledge receipt of your check for \$55.24 — which we have credited to your account.

Thank you for your check for \$55.24 in payment of your account.

* * *

Answering your letter of the 14th instant, will advise that our lowest price is \$7.85 per dozen.

Thank you for your letter of the 14th. Our lowest price is \$7.85 per dozen.

* * *

This is now past due and ask that we be favored with remittance. May we hear from you with check by return mail?

Your account is two months past due. Won't you kindly send us a check by return mail? We will appreciate it.

* * *

We are holding your order and awaiting your reply, we are respectfully yours—.

We'll hold the order pending your reply.

* * *

Appreciating your valued order and trusting you will receive the package promptly.

Thank you for your order, which was filled immediately. If there should be any unnecessary delay, kindly let us know.

* * *

We are enclosing herewith our check for \$6, representing the overpayment on this order, and we trust that you will accept our apology for the oversight.

Check for \$6, the overpayment, is enclosed and we apologize sincerely for our negligence.

* * *

Acknowledge herewith your reply to our letter of the 19th. Thank you for your reply to our letter of the 19th.

* * *

Dictated Letters

We trust the goods will arrive promptly.
If you don't receive this shipment in a reasonable time,
please let us know.

* * *

Trusting that this is the information you need, and thanking
you for past and future favors, we beg to remain
We believe this is the information you desire. If not, please
do not hesitate to call upon us for more.

* * *

Worn-out Phrases to Avoid

Thanking you in advance
The writer wishes to say
In compliance with your request
Hoping to hear from you again
This is to inform you that
Up to this writing
We trust this will be satisfactory
Trusting this will be satisfactory
Regarding your communication of
Awaiting your further orders
I have before me your letter
Thanking you for past favors
Replying to your inquiry of
Even date, of recent date
According to our records
Referring to the matter
We exceedingly regret
We beg to remain

Topic No. 2. Making Words Count

The second step in making every letter a sales
letter is *conciseness*. Let's assume that we've

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already eliminated those threadbare or lifeless figures of speech that make a letter hackneyed and stereotyped. Now let's also cut out all "beating around the bush" — all "rambling" — all words and phrases that are unnecessary to the proper tone and purpose of the letter.

Words cost money. They take time to dictate, typewrite and read. Let's make them count! In many firms, the correspondence cost is as high as \$100,000 a year. Whatever it is in your office, remember that meaningless words waste money. When you've taken 40 words to say something that might have been better said in 20, you've unconsciously taken money out of the cash drawer and thrown it out the window.

More than that — you've actually made it harder for the recipient of your letter to read and understand your message. Don't confuse this with the mere cutting out of stereotyped phrases. A word can be unnecessary without being stereotyped. Here are a few examples of the "long" and the "short" of it.

We will ask you to send your orders to (9 words)

Please send your orders to (5 words)

* * *

At the present time (4 words)

At present (2 words)

* * *

We do not feel we can afford (7 words)

We cannot afford (3 words)

* * *

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Thank you for your check for \$620 which has been placed to your credit (14 words)

Thank you for your check for \$620 (7 words)

* * *

We have had a report from our Receiving Department that your cabinet came in with the left-end panel damaged (20 words)

Unfortunately, your cabinet came in with the left-end panel damaged (11 words)

* * *

Please mail us credit memorandum for same (7 words)

Please mail credit memorandum (4 words)

* * *

Replying to your letter of November 6, we are sorry to state we do not have a New York representative (20 words)

Sorry — but we have no representative in New York (9 words)

* * *

As you know, Paper Boxes attractive in appearance frequently aid in increasing sales that could not otherwise be had (19 words)

As you know, attractive Paper Boxes frequently increase sales (9 words)

* * *

The sample referred to, Mr. Barlow, in your kind letter of September 24, was just received today (17 words)

The sample mentioned in your letter of September 24th has just come in (13 words)

* * *

You will be surprised at the number of little words that can be taken out of the average letter without impairing its meaning in any way. "To show you the results that you can obtain" — can

just as well be said without the word "that." "Your product" is certainly better — and shorter — than "the product that you make."

These examples are but a few of thousands that might be given. A few useless words in each letter mean a few hundred a day for each dictator and thousands and hundreds of thousands for the firm to pay for throughout the entire year.

Topic No. 3. Opening Sentences

Next to the physical form of the letter, the one big thing which influences that important "first impression" is the opening sentence.

Without doubt, this is one of the weakest points in a letter, yet it is one of the most vital. On it depends to a large extent the "frame of mind" in which your reader tackles the rest of the letter. If the reaction to your message depends on the right frame of mind, as in the case of an answer to an inquiry, a settlement of a complaint or a request for money, then it is doubly important that the way be prepared by a friendly, courteous approach.

Make the first paragraph *do something* besides just let the recipient know you're answering his letter. He knows that anyway.

Keep these three points in mind when dictating first sentences and you'll have no trouble in getting your letters off to a flying start:

1. Express pleasure or regret, as "It was certainly fine to hear from you" or "Sorry — but it's impossible to grant your request."

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2. Show that some action has been taken, as "Your order is already under way" — or "Just as soon as your letter came in, we took immediate steps to . . . "

3. Ask or answer a question, as "What would you do in this case?" or "Yes, we'll be glad to date your orders ahead."

Here are some examples of opening sentences to avoid:

"We have received your letter of November 26th."

(He knows you have or you wouldn't be answering it.)

* * *

"Replying to your letter of the 22nd, would state that . . . "

(Lacks friendliness, warmth and courtesy. Does nothing but acknowledge the letter.)

* * *

"Acknowledging (or Responding to) your letter of the 10th inst."

(Same criticism applies.)

* * *

"I have before me your letter of the 21st."

(Doesn't mean anything. What does he care?)

* * *

"Answering your communication of the 1st."

(Why tell him the obvious?)

* * *

"We have carefully noted your letter of the 23rd."

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(Lacks sincerity. Sounds cold and severe.)

* * *

“Regarding your letter of the 10th.”

(Does nothing but acknowledge, when it should be putting the reader in the right frame of mind.)

* * *

Write as you talk. A letter is *you* in print. It used to be that “the only letters to display symptoms of red-blooded authorship were either love letters or the controversial letters of statesmen.” It’s different now. Modern times demand modern methods — and modern letters. One way to make sure they’ll be modern is to “get off on the right foot” by means of a useful, friendly, courteous first sentence.

Topic No. 4. Closing Sentences

We’ve discussed the “entrance” or opening sentence of the dictated letter. Now let’s take the “exit.”

In as many as seven out of ten letters written by the average dictator, the closing sentence is as antiquated as a ten-year-old radio. Too many men have formed the expensive habit of indulging in the participial ending — “Trusting we may be favored, etc.”

The participial ending lacks definiteness and it does not fulfill any particular purpose. It is used simply because it is easy! Why should we want to avoid it? First, because the participle is the weakest form of the verb, and second, and

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more important, because the participial conclusion has been done to death by the pounding of a billion typewriter keys.

One of the surest tests of a good letter is to read it aloud — see if it sounds natural — see if it might be your own conversation, were your prospect or customer right across the desk from you. If the man addressed *were* there, how would it sound if you finished your talk with, “Hoping this meets with your approval, I beg to remain . . . ”?

If you only knew how much more power, friendliness and warmth you can put into your letters, just by closing them simply and naturally, you’d never use a stereotyped participial ending again.

Stop with a direct statement — in some cases with a question. Then the last thing the recipient of your letter reads *means something*. It is an integral part of the letter and is worthy of the space it occupies; rather than a meaningless jargon that steals time from the dictator and stenographer, only to waste it again on the reader.

Let’s take some examples:

Hoping you will appreciate our position in the matter, we are

might be better expressed

Does this satisfactorily explain our position? If not, please let us know.

* * *

Thanking you, we remain

might be better expressed

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Thank you very much

or just,

Thank you.

* * *

Looking forward to promptly filling your order, we are
might be better expressed

Your order will receive prompt attention.

* * *

Awaiting your reply with interest, we remain

might be better expressed

We shall be very glad to hear from you.

* * *

Appreciating your valued order and trusting you will re-
ceive the shipment promptly, we are

might be better expressed

We appreciate this business and ask that you let us know
if the goods don't arrive promptly, or if anything isn't
entirely satisfactory.

* * *

Thanking you in advance, we beg to remain

might be better expressed

We will appreciate your cooperation.

* * *

Thanking you for past favors and trusting we may merit
their continuance, we are

might be better expressed

You have always been very generous with your cooperation
and we appreciate it.

These suggestions are purely illustrative. Many other expressions might be equally effective. The thing to remember is that, according to psychological tests, the first and last impressions are more important than those which are received in between. With this in mind, let's make the letter "good to the last word."

Topic No. 5. The Right Tone

How can we strike the right tone in our letters — and why is the tone important?

Tone is not *what* you say but *how* you say it. Wars have been waged, fights have been fought and business has been lost in abundance because of an unintentional use of the wrong tone. Men write letters frequently with the best of intentions and with nothing but the friendliest of thoughts — yet the meaning isn't clear and the attitude is misinterpreted.

When a man talking to us face to face wins our complete confidence, we often say, "His frankness won us over." What we usually mean is, his friendliness, his sincerity, his whole attitude — for these are the things that inspire confidence.

All are *personal* qualities. A stone wall can't be friendly or sincere. Nor can a typewritten sheet of paper. You can't make a letter ring with sincerity unless you make it sound like a real person. It must have personality.

Now — if you agree with that, then you'll agree also that personality requires two people — one to radiate it and one to reflect it.

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A letter that talks entirely about you, or your company or your interests can have but very little personality, for there is no real reader interest to reflect it. Most folks are essentially selfish — they are interested in you or your proposition only insofar as it affects them. They want to be talked to in their own language, not yours. The same psychological laws that create liking and trust between two persons in conversation create liking and trust in a letter.

Write your message as far as possible with the other fellow's viewpoint in mind. Be what they call "an understanding cuss," for you never met one yet who didn't make friends easily.

Don't let your letters be all "we-our-us" or all "you and your." Both angles are too one-sided to be effective. It's the "you and I" or "yours and ours" attitude that we want, for that's exactly as it would be if your reader were right across the desk from you.

Look for the personality in this letter:

Acknowledge herewith your reply to our letter of the 19th specifying . . . of which to make . . . in accordance with the specifications sent us under date of the 17th.

We have revised it. See if you don't like the tone better. Will it not have a greater effect on the good will of the company sending it out?

Thank you for your reply to our letter of the 19th in which you specify . . . for your. . . . We have the measurements and work will be started immediately.

Every letter that leaves your desk is a picture of your organization and of you. Every letter you send out helps someone decide what kind of man you are, what kind of organization you are associated with and whether or not he wants to do business with you. Every dealing you have with a customer or prospect has its effect on your company's good will. Every word, sentence and paragraph in your letters has its effect. Because you can't *see* the effect of your words, it is doubly important that the tone be calculated to aid rather than hinder the message. By writing as you talk, by being natural and friendly and sincere and "human" in your dictating, you can have every letter make a loyal friend for your house and a booster for its products.

Topic No. 6. Making Letters Friendly

It is a common error on the part of literally thousands of businessmen to confine advertising to the Advertising Department.

It can be safely said that more staunch friends and customers are made through direct correspondence than are won by newspaper advertising. The way a routine business letter is written frequently determines whether a customer stays a customer or buys somewhere else.

Just as the personal contact of an official or representative can strengthen or weaken a business relationship, so can a business letter weaken or strengthen it. Few advertisements are good enough

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to bring back to life a good customer who has been "killed" by a tactless or unfriendly correspondent.

So much for the responsibility of the letter writer. It's a big job and should be kept constantly in mind.

The lesson to be learned, therefore, is: *Make* your letters make friends. The best salesmen in the world, the most popular people and the most successful letter writers are usually those who make friends easily. That faculty is "born" in some people, acquired by others. It can be acquired by anybody who will follow a few very simple rules:

Bring the *other* fellow into the picture! Say whatever you have to say with *his* problems in mind, *his* ideas, *his* likes and dislikes. Put yourself in his place before you even start to dictate and consider the effect of what you are going to say and how you are going to say it — on his "feeling" for your firm.

Be sympathetic — tell your story with *his* advantages in mind. After all, it's what your prospect or customer wants to know that counts, not what you want to tell him.

Be courteous. If the words "Thank you," "Please," "We apologize," "We are sorry," "Pardon," etc., will help to bring you a little closer to your man, by all means use them. Keep in mind above all that you are trying to *make friends*.

Following are a few examples of phrases that make business friendships almost an impossibility. We wrote you several times and have not had one reply to our letters.

* * *

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We are at a loss to understand why our explanations haven't cleared this matter up.

* * *

You were billed only in accordance with your demands on our service.

* * *

(To a dealer) We have lost a number of worth-while customers because of your unbusinesslike methods.

* * *

It is hard for us to conceive how you could make such a statement.

* * *

We've been too busy to answer your inquiry.

* * *

Now don't go to the other extreme and get familiar. Being friendly and being familiar are two different things. Too much friendliness is just as bad as too little. Just "be yourself" if you're naturally a friendly individual, and, if not, pretend you're someone who is.

Topic No. 7. How to Make Every Letter a Sales Letter

We are now going to discuss two questions: Why should every letter that leaves your office be a sales letter? Also, How can we *make* them all sales letters?

In the first place, any letter that puts the recipient in a friendlier and more receptive frame of mind toward your firm is, in one sense at least, a real sales letter.

The answer to the first question is: it is an economic waste *not* to make every letter that leaves your office a sales letter. The letter is going

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out anyway. The cost of postage, stationery, stenography, etc., will be practically the same whether the letter takes full advantage of its opportunities or not. In short, you've everything to gain and nothing to lose.

Now, how to do it. There are two ways; which one you use depends upon the circumstances.

There is the *indirect* method of turning your letter into a sales letter; this requires no addition to the message, merely a friendlier, more interesting, "warmer" way of saying it.

Suppose the purpose of your letter is simply to tell your customer that there will be a delay of a few days in the delivery of the goods or material he ordered. You can tell that story in a cold-blooded, matter-of-fact way — or in a friendly way. Both letters will give the same information, but the second, the friendly one, will put the customer in a somewhat different frame of mind. The mental reaction to the cold statement of fact might be this: "Confound it, those people can't ship when they said they would." The mental reaction to the friendly message might be this: "Well, a few days won't make much difference and they certainly seem to be doing their best."

That's the indirect way. Simply by being earnest and friendly about it, you have made him think — "that's a good house. It's a pleasure to do business with them. They're *human!*" And that is certainly worth while, isn't it?

Then there's the *direct* method of turning a routine letter into a sales letter; this means watch-

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ing for opportunities to say something about your product, service or house which will cause a reaction in your favor. I don't mean in the obvious places. When a man sends you an inquiry, it is a signal for your best array of sales arguments. Naturally, you'll give them — for that is the message that is expected. There are thousands of other places where these so-called sales arguments *aren't* invited or expected but where, tactfully put in, they can do worlds of good.

To illustrate the point, let's take a concrete case — the one mentioned before, where the problem is to tell the customer that his shipment is going to be delayed.

Example No. 1. The cold-blooded, matter-of-fact way of saying it:

This is to inform you that the stamping machine ordered by you last week can't be delivered until Friday, due to the fact that the special attachments won't be ready until that time.

Example No. 2. The friendlier way of saying the same thing:

The stamping machine which you ordered last week was promised for tomorrow — and up until today we fully expected to be on time with delivery.

Unfortunately, however, the attachments you requested are taking longer to finish than we anticipated, so I am afraid the very best we can do now is Friday.

We are not forgetting that you are in a hurry and you can rest assured that everything humanly possible is being done to get this equipment to you promptly!

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Example No. 3. Adding a little to the message to help keep the man sold on the machine and its maker:

The stamping machine which you ordered last week was promised for tomorrow — and up until today we fully expected to be on time with delivery. Unfortunately, however, the attachments you requested are taking longer to finish than we anticipated, so I am afraid the very best we can do now is Friday.

The S-J Stamping Machine will very quickly save considerable time and money for you and I know you are anxious to get it under way.

Rest assured that everything consistent with high-grade work is being done to rush it through. You can safely expect it on Friday at the very latest.

You may be saying — “Yes, but that’s longer than the other letters.” It is and justifiably so. A letter should be as long as is necessary to tell the story *effectively* — no longer and no shorter. It is my contention that the story isn’t effectively told unless it does more than recite the bare facts.

Topic No. 8. Making Your Answer Complete

If there’s any one thing a man hates to get in the mail, it’s an unsatisfactory or incomplete answer to his letter.

Many letters from a customer or prospect contain two or three, or even more, separate and distinct questions. If it is at all possible, *answer all of them*. If you can’t answer some, at least say *why* you can’t; don’t just ignore them.

Before you even start to dictate, analyze carefully the letter you’re answering. To what kind of

man are you writing? Young? Old? An executive or official? A clerk? Do you know him personally? Does he know who you are? Is he an important customer or prospect?

Then ask yourself a few more questions. What does he want? Can you give it to him or must you turn him down? Which is the most important of his needs? How far can you go in accommodating him and still act in accordance with house policies? Is it necessary that you strive for any kind of action? If not, is there anything you could add to your message to make him a little more sold on your house or its products?

Then, with the picture clear in your mind, go ahead and dictate.

But your questions aren't over. Read *your* letter just as carefully as you read his. Have you written a really complete and satisfying answer to his letter? Have you answered *all* his questions and given him *all* the information he requested? Is your letter friendly, courteous, sincere and to the point? Is there anything in it that will bring your customer closer to your house? Is there anything in it by which he could possibly be antagonized? Can you shorten it in any way, without making it less complete or less friendly? Is it attractively set up and inviting in physical appearance?

The answer to a letter requesting information whether from a customer or prospect — is one of the most important letters in your routine correspondence. It shows interest in your firm and the

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products it sells. It is an invitation to "come in and get acquainted." It's the open door, many times, to thousands of dollars' worth of business.

The impression your letter makes as it accepts that invitation governs the future attitude and, in many cases, the future business that results. This simply means — give some real constructive thought to what you are going to say before you say it. Your reward will come in increased good will, greater friendliness toward your firm, respect for your own ability and possibly some extra dollars-and-cents business.

Topic No. 9. How to Write an Adjustment Letter

Let's talk specifically now about one particular kind of letter.

All that has been said in these discussions about stereotyped form, conciseness, friendliness, etc., applies to all forms of business correspondence.

There are some particular types of letters, however, that require more study and thought than others; one of the most important is the so-called adjustment letter — the letter you dictate in answer to a complaint.

First, let's remember that letters from a disgruntled customer are danger signals and that the most diplomatic handling is necessary to prevent loss of future business. The one big thing you're trying to accomplish is to *keep the complainant on your books*. (In certain rare cases the man's business isn't desirable, but these cases require special treatment.) How you reach your objective

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depends, of course, upon the circumstances surrounding the particular case.

Make an investigation first — to settle on the justification for the complaint. Determine whether the dissatisfaction is with the goods you sold him, with the use to which the goods were put, with the service that he expected to receive or with the price.

Is it a clear-cut case of *your* error? Is *he* definitely wrong through some misunderstanding on his part? Or is it one of those borderline cases where it is a difficult matter to lay your finger on the guilty person?

A complete analysis of the cause or causes of the complaint should (1) show you the angle from which to write your adjustment letter and give you the necessary data around which to write it; (2) give you an opportunity to reduce the possibility that that kind of complaint will occur again.

To consider the second point first: if there's a weak spot in your organization and it is pointed out to you through the complaint of a customer, you should lose no time in patching it up.

The man complaining asks usually for an immediate adjustment. In cases where you unquestionably are at fault (and in some cases probably where you are not), you will, of course, grant his request. But even in this simple type of adjustment letter, great care should be exercised to make sure that he doesn't feel the adjustment is made grudgingly. Give it wholeheartedly or not at all.

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A harder problem exists where the complaint is justified but where nothing specific in the way of an adjustment is suggested. The customer is sore — and takes the attitude, “What are you going to do about it?” You must first determine how far to go in your adjustment and then decide how to tell him about it in such a way as to pacify him completely.

The hardest problem of all arises when you don’t consider it wise to grant the demands of the complainant and must turn his view around to your way of thinking; you must refuse his request for an adjustment and “make him like it.”

In all answers to complaints, no matter what type they may be, there are certain rules that should almost invariably be followed:

Don’t keep him waiting for your answer.

Sidestep your customer’s anger and get into sympathy with him. Realize that, whether he has just cause for complaint or merely *thinks* he has, it’s all the same to him and you must respect his mood.

Explain the circumstances regarding the adjustment.

Tell him frankly and sincerely what you plan to do regarding it.

Make your closing paragraph friendly and, if possible, work in an invitation for renewed business.

Don’t think it necessary to write a short letter. Tell the story in detail, so that you leave in the reader’s mind a clear-cut understanding that will

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be satisfactory to him and effective in holding his good will.

To emphasize the importance of better adjustment letters, let me just remind you that the securing of *new* customers in most lines of business is an expensive process. It's much *more* expensive if you lose them shortly afterwards.

Topic No. 10. How to Write an Inquiry Letter

Another important type of letter is the answer to an inquiry.

When a firm sends out a series of letters to get inquiries, you can bet everything you own that the letter used to *answer* those inquiries will be as carefully and painstakingly put together as it is possible to make it.

That is right, of course, because inquiries in themselves, while encouraging, don't cut down the overhead. An inquiry is just a nibble and sometimes not even a real "bite."

There's another kind of inquiry letter, however, which is just as important but which doesn't receive half so much consideration as the one just mentioned. This type of letter is not the result of a concentrated drive or definitely planned campaign. It just drifts in from one source or another and is usually handled right along with the regular correspondence.

The answers to such inquiries are dictated, usually in a hurry. This is all right, providing the answer is given as much thought and consideration as it deserves. "More sales from our

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inquiries" should be the watchword just as much as "More inquiries from our advertising."

In addition to the rules which have been given in previous discussions and which apply even more forcibly to these important inquiry letters, there are certain points to be always kept in mind.

1. Answer inquiries the same day they are received. Strike while the iron is hot. Give all inquiry letters the right of way.

2. Carefully size up the needs of your prospect and answer his inquiry in terms of the advantage in your product or service to him. Be absolutely complete in your answer, giving all the information that he will require in order to want what you're trying to sell. When you ask him to do something, give reasons.

3. If a catalog is to be sent, send it with your letter, not "under separate cover."

4. Don't make the prospect wait for his information while you refer him to your "branch office" or "local representative." Answer him first — then let your local agents follow it up.

5. Allow a reasonable amount of time for an order or reply to come in — and then follow up with another letter, and another, and another, and keep them going out at regular intervals as long as your percentage of returns on a number of similar follow-ups makes it profitable. Some firms use three follow-ups and then "kill" the name. Others use ten. Still others write indefinitely until the man dies or orders or asks that you stop writing. This depends on the circumstances.

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6. Let each follow-up present your story from a different angle. Different appeals influence different persons in different ways. A "quality story" might not be so effective with some people as a story of what your product has done for other people. Many men have "fallen" for the eighth or ninth appeal, though they were apparently unmoved by the preceding ones.

7. Send descriptive material, if it is interestingly and convincingly written, along with your answer.

8. Have your reply, including both letter and accompanying literature, as neat and attractive as it is possible to make it. The letter itself should be the last word in neatness and accuracy. The folders, booklets, catalogs, etc., should be good, clean copies. If samples are to be sent, have them carefully packed, wrapped and tied. These little things invariably help to make a favorable impression and increase the chances of making a sale.

Every inquiry you receive, at least so far as you know, is from a potential customer who may be worth hundreds or thousands of dollars' worth of business in the years to come. Give, therefore, more than passing consideration to those good people who invite you to solicit their business.

Topic No. 11. How to Write Collection Letters

"John Doe is three months overdue, Bill. Write him a letter and jack him up." Bill dictates the letter in the usual way.

That's the procedure with some firms; with most it is a cut-and-dried proposition of pulling the

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card out of the file at a certain date, sending Form Letter No. 1, following it up so many days later and systematically carrying it through to the point of either getting the money or bringing legal pressure to bear.

In either case, the letters sent are collection letters and are governed by the same common-sense rules. Whether you are familiar with them or not, it's a mighty good idea to review them now and then — simply to keep up to the highest possible efficiency — *for collection letters are important*. A sale isn't really a sale until the merchandise is paid for, because until then you are not only minus a profit but you are "out" the goods as well.

Start first with the fact that there are two objectives: to get the money and to keep the customer. Even if you decide that the customer isn't worth keeping, you must be extremely careful not to antagonize him. A disgruntled customer usually results in the loss of more business than his own.

Next classify your delinquent accounts into three groups: good customers and good pay, good customers but slow pay, questionable customers and poor pay.

Obviously, you wouldn't write the same kind of letter to the third group as you would to the first, or write to the first as you would to the second. If you aren't sure whether a customer belongs in the second or third, give him the benefit of the doubt and treat him as a "good customer — slow pay" until you are *sure*.

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There should be a series of collection letters — different in their appeal — to each of these three groups. There will, of course, be some situations that call for special handling, but the majority can be taken care of by these so-called form letters. The “special” letters should be carefully written, typed, gone over, improved and retyped before being sent out; they should *not* be hastily dictated along with the rest of the mail. I repeat, collection letters are important and deserving of all the time necessary to make them effective. Please notice that I used the phrase “so-called form letters.” They should be “form” letters only insofar as the same “form” is being sent to a number of people. Don’t let them be “form” letters in the sense that they *read* like “form” letters.

A collection letter, or indeed any other kind of letter, can *appear* personal, whether it is or not. The minute your customer sees what he believes to be a “form” letter, he says, “Just a routine letter. We can hold them up a while longer.” On the other hand, if he receives a typewritten letter that reads as if you were looking right at him, instead of at a large group of delinquent accounts, he may sit up and take notice.

Here are a few tips about the writing and sending out of collection letters:

Be prompt — send some statement of the amount, either with the merchandise or shortly after.

Be regular — no customer objects to being reminded of his obligation, providing the reminder is regular and courteous.

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Don't apologize for asking for money after it is due. You only make it easier for him to disregard your request.

Don't be too lenient — unless you don't need the money and don't ever expect to.

Don't let anger, contempt or pity get into any of your letters — these are emotions that practically never lead to the payment of bills.

Be a little firmer in your demand with each follow-up — write courteously, frankly, but let him know you mean business.

Show fairness all the time — and in the early letters give the man every opportunity to tell you if your bill is wrong. Sometimes bills are wrong, and then complications of a serious nature are likely to develop.

Let us assume that you have subdivided your delinquent accounts into the three groups as suggested:

Group 1: good customers — good pay

Group 2: good customers — slow pay

Group 3: questionable customers — poor pay.

Now we'll take three concrete examples, all built around the same situation.

Smith Brothers and Jones owe you \$263.50 for merchandise delivered and accepted ninety days ago. You sent a bill with or shortly after the goods were shipped, just to make sure their understanding agreed with yours as to the amount. In thirty days you sent along the usual statement. In sixty days, we'll say that you wrote a simple reminder letter, something like this:

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This is just a little friendly reminder — that our bill to you of January 6th for \$263.50 is still unpaid.

If there is any question about the amount, won't you please tell us so that the matter can be straightened out? And if it's just a case of being overlooked, won't you please put a check in the return mail?

Thanks very much.

This letter may or may not apply to your business. If it does — and you want to — please feel free to go ahead and use it.

Ninety days go by and you receive neither word nor money. Here is a suggestion for handling Group 1 (good customer — good pay):

You have been so very prompt in your payments in the past that we can't understand what has happened to our January 6th bill for \$263.50.

Are we at fault in some way — has the bill just been mislaid — or is there some adjustment pending that we aren't familiar with? Won't you be kind enough to either send us a check (if our bill is correct) or write and tell us just exactly what the situation is?

Here's the way Group 2 (good customer — slow pay) might be approached:

Probably the most difficult letter that we have to write is the letter to a good customer who doesn't pay his bills as promptly as we like them paid.

We appreciate his business — we don't like to annoy him — and yet our terms of 2% 10 days, 30 days net must be lived up to, or our own obligations can't be met.

You'll see the fairness in that, I'm sure. Our bill of January 6th for \$263.50 is over three months old now and sixty days overdue. Won't you please send us your check by return mail — so that you'll be all straight on our books again? You'll feel better about it and so will we.

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And here's a letter that might be used to Group 3 (questionable customer — poor pay):

When a bill becomes 3 months old, it's time to do something about it, isn't it?

On January 6th, we billed you for \$263.50 — subject to our regular terms of 2% 10 days, 30 days net — for merchandise delivered to you late in December.

A month ago we asked whether there was any question as to the amount. Nothing happened.

Now we are always glad to accommodate our customers but you realize, don't you, that there must be a limit? We can't go on being lenient forever and expect to stay in business. You don't want us to take legal steps to collect this bill and neither do we. Won't you therefore put a check in the return mail — so that your credit standing with us will be as it should be?

Thank you.

Remember that every collection letter should aim to collect the money, but at no sacrifice of good will. Try to maintain an even balance between the two objectives. Don't work so hard for the money that the customer will be "off you forever." And don't be so friendly and lenient that the customer reads between the lines and decides that you really aren't in earnest about it.

Let every recipient of one of your collection letters think your letter is addressed to him and him only. Use form letters if you will, but make them *personal*.

Topic No. 12. How to Revive Inactive Customers

This discussion is about the business graveyard — that desolated land of lost customers where

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the dead may be made to rise again *if* you push the right button.

Before we get into that, let's discuss the question of what made these accounts die out and become inactive. What did you do to them to "kill" them, as far as business for you is concerned?

Just as every company receives a certain amount of business without any apparent effort, so it likewise loses a certain amount the same way. Business drifts in and drifts out and for these changes in the sales volume no credit or blame can be attached to you.

In both cases, however, that applies to the smallest part of the total volume. You get the major portion of your business because you've earned it and you lose the major portion of your "inactive" customers because you deserve to.

If you could make a study of all your correspondence during the past few years, you'd probably find that some letters were tactless, some were antagonistic and curt, some were critical and superior and some, perhaps, were downright nasty. Notice I say "some." How many that represents varies with every business, but the chances are that the size of your "graveyard" will be in direct proportion to the number of these letters in your files.

It is so easy to drive away business through everyday correspondence that you just don't realize you're doing it.

Take an opening paragraph like this, for instance:

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Dear Mr. Brown:

We have written you three times during the past months and for some reason you haven't seen fit to reply.

Accusing a man of discourtesy will not bring the two of you any closer together, will it? Here's how it might have been written:

Dear Mr. Brown:

I wonder if you'll be good enough to do me a favor. I must have "fallen down" completely in my attempt to tell you our proposition or I would certainly have heard from you by now.

* * *

Here's another type that gets a fellow's back up:

Dear Mr. Brown:

In looking over our files, I find that we haven't received any orders from you for sixteen months. Why is this, Mr. Brown?

The writer sounds grieved and antagonistic, which only tends to make the inactive customer glad he is inactive. Here's another way of saying the same thing:

Dear Mr. Brown:

Have you, in your business, ever had a good customer suddenly stop buying, without any apparent reason? Well, that's the predicament I'm in now.

* * *

Then there's the letter that starts off in a critical or superior sort of manner:

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Dear Mr. Brown:

That old-fashioned filing system of yours is losing money for you every day in the week. Did you realize that?

“Trying to tell me how to run my business, eh? Well, you can tell those folks, etc., etc.” Here’s one way to express the same thought with finesse:

Dear Mr. Brown:

You’ve heard of the H. A. Snowden Company? Well, they told me just last Thursday that the eliminating of their old filing system meant a decrease in overhead of 20 per cent the first year.

These are only examples, of course. They illustrate but a very few of many different ways in which the letter writer can lose business. One way, therefore, to curtail the size of your company’s “graveyard” is carefully to search each letter, before you sign it, for anything and everything that might “rub the wrong way.”

How about going down to the “graveyard” of inactive customers to see if we can’t bring some of them back to life?

First, why are they “dead”? For either of two reasons — because of something you did or something someone else did. Either a member of your organization rubbed him the wrong way — by letter, wire, telephone or in person, or a competitor told him an attractive story about price, quality, service or whatnot that made your proposition seem like the second best. Therefore, let’s divide the inactive file into different groups and treat them accordingly.

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You will probably find that there are some cases where you can pretty well lay your finger on the trouble. You *know* that those in this group have drifted to another firm because of price, or service, or for some other reason touching on price, quality or service that you feel was beyond your control.

You will find others that can be definitely traced through your file of complaints. These are cases where the customer is inactive because of some real or imaginary grievance.

Group 1 consists of lost customers who are inactive because they have been sold on the idea of buying elsewhere.

Group 2 are the lost customers who have been antagonized by some unintended display of tactlessness, discourtesy, anger or indifference.

Group 3 are the lost customers about whom you know nothing, except that for some unknown reason they stopped buying.

Thus we have them classified and we are ready to work on them. A series of three letters to each group would be one effective method of planning the campaign.

In a general way, Group 1 should be handled with a formidable array of sales arguments to convince the ex-customer that he is missing something — in price, quality or service — by not buying from you.

Group 2 should be approached with the one idea of straightening out the complaint. In some cases you will decide that an apology or explanation

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is necessary before the customer would think of buying from you again. In other cases you will decide that opening up the wound would do more harm than good. (In making that decision, however, bear in mind the fact that little wrinkles frequently stay wrinkles until they are ironed out and that many times a reconciliation is impossible until the grievance is satisfactorily eliminated.)

Group 3 should receive “sounding-out” letters, written with only one thought in mind — to find out, in a nice way, just why the customer has stopped buying.

The following letter is an example of one appeal that could be used on this group:

Do you feel the same way I do about these so-called “inactive accounts”?

If you do — you don’t like them — at least until you know the reason why they are inactive.

The . . . which you have bought from us in the past were, to the best of my knowledge, the finest . . . possible to make. They were priced right, I know, for our margin is exceedingly small. And we certainly tried to give you A-1 service.

What I’d like to know — and what you would want to know in my place — is why aren’t we serving you now?

(Include here a paragraph of sales arguments.)

In short, we have what I believe you want and need — at the right price. Won’t you please indicate your requirements on the enclosed card and let us quote you? I’m anxious to place your name where it rightfully belongs — on our active customer list — and I think you’ll appreciate having it there.

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Whatever letters you write, write them from the other fellow's standpoint. Don't let even the slightest feeling of antagonism creep in. Be friendly, courteous and interested in his problems, as well as your own. In a nutshell, look at it from his side of the fence and make him look at it from yours.

Topic No. 13. The Importance of Physical Appearance

In personal selling, whether retailer to the public, wholesaler to the retailer, or manufacturer to the jobber, there is a distinct advantage in personal contact that is not enjoyed by letters or other forms of printed salesmanship.

The modulation of the voice, the interpretative glance of the eye, the contraction and relaxation of the muscles, the posture of the body — all these things emphasize the spoken message. For this reason, the personal interview is nearly always the most effective method of getting business.

Keep in mind the fact that as we talk about selling now, we refer not only to sales letters, but to a large percentage of your general correspondence. You invariably have something to sell, if only an idea (the idea of sending you a check, the idea of forgetting a complaint, the idea of sending you an order, etc.).

It would be nice if your star salesman could personally call on all your prospects often enough to "do the trick." It would be nice if the head of your collection department could personally ask

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for past-due checks. It would be nice if every inquiry could be answered personally. And wouldn't it be nice if all complaints could be diplomatically smoothed out by one of your executives in personal session, perhaps at luncheon, with the complainant?

The impracticability of all this calls, of course, for correspondence. The inquiry, the complaint, the adjustment, the collection — all must be handled via the mails.

Come back, now, to where we started — the advantage the personal visit has over the mail visit. The thing to do is to find for correspondence some way to make up, at least partially, the deficiency, so that the contents or message in your letter will get an even break.

What — in a letter — corresponds to the appearance and personality of the salesman? The physical appearance of the envelope and letterhead, the character of the paper, the make-up of the design (where your name and address, etc., go), the quality of the typewriting and the set-up of the letter on the page.

What impression do your letters make on the people who receive them, *before* they read them?

The letterhead is picked up by the recipient and in many cases scrutinized, if only casually or subconsciously, before he starts to read. He may get a decidedly *favorable* impression (which puts him in the right frame of mind to start your letter). He may get a decidedly *negative* impression (in which case the letter gets off to a bad start).

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Or he may get a *neutral* impression (which works neither for nor against you).

Look on the *appearance* of your letters as you do on the appearance of your salesmen. Make it impressive and inviting. Use good paper, good typography or artwork and good printing. Insist on uniformly good typewriting, exercising care as to salutation, margins, paragraphs, spacing, close, etc.

One way to be reasonably sure of getting this is to pick out an outstanding letter from the best of your stenographers' work and use it as a model to give to the other girls. Dictate a letter to all stenographers and typists, outlining in detail how you want your letters arranged. Specify a stepped-off salutation or a flush salutation, whichever you prefer. Tell them whether you want indented paragraphs or block paragraphs. Incidentally, the block system is a timesaver and is recommended for this reason. Tell them anything you feel would improve its appearance. But *tell them* — and give them all the same instructions.

It will pay you in dollars and cents to make the *first* impression created by your letters a *favorable* impression. It always helps to "get off on the right foot."

Topic No. 14. Letter Uses

How many different ways do *you* use letters? There may be some that haven't occurred to you — some that might be the means of increasing your sales volume.

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Generally speaking, letters are used to buy and sell merchandise, solicit inquiries, collect accounts, adjust complaints, revive old business, increase good will, stimulate salesmen, build mailing lists and educate employees. There are a lot of other things, however, that the business letter can do for you, and you should at least know what they are.

More specifically, then, letters can find out why an order wasn't forthcoming after you had so promptly answered an inquiry; discover the opinion of dealers and consumers on your product or service; follow up or prepare the way for a salesman's call; gather credit information; determine the reason for weakness in any given territory; eliminate friction between dealers or salesmen; extend or refuse credit; find new employees; sell dealers on the idea of cooperating; and develop new uses or new markets for your product. There are countless other useful and valuable functions.

When one gets into the subject of letters, there are two phases to be considered — how to improve the type of letters you now use, and how to extend the scope of your letter activities to make your stationery more productive. Think it over. Are you supporting your salesmen as you should? Are you giving your dealers all the cooperation you might? Are you covering all the avenues for possible business that can be covered profitably? Do your stenographers and typists have lists and form letters that they can be writing whenever they catch up with their regular work?

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Build an outline of the possibilities for letters in your office, making it, of course, fit the facilities for sending them out. As part of that outline or chart, start an "idea file," for supplying the material for the letters you find you can use. Take six manila folders or envelopes and label them "Ideas about our products or service," "Ideas about quality, price and usefulness," "Ideas about materials and methods," "Ideas about business policies," "Ideas about plans and their execution," and "Ideas about work standards or discipline."

Give various men in your office a list of those subjects and encourage them to keep on the lookout, all the time, for ideas for the idea file. (Incidentally, such a file would be of inestimable value in your advertising work, too.) In this way you will be stimulating new ideas and new ways in which to use them.

If at the same time you are constantly improving *all* letters from the standpoint of friendliness, conciseness, tone, etc., you can't help but step up the efficiency of your correspondence department by a very sizable percentage.

Topic No. 15. How to Avoid "Telegraphic" Letters

Telegraphic writing means taking the wrong kind of short cut; it is so named because it resembles the composition of telegrams, where words count for money. The words to leave out of a letter are the meaningless, *unnecessary* words that serve only to make the letter longer — not

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the little connecting words like “the,” “I,” “we,” “us,” “that,” and “a,” which when omitted make the letter jumpy and “telegraphic.”

Don’t misunderstand. We are striving, always, for conciseness. We want the letter as short as we can make it and still have it tell a complete, friendly story — but there’s a limit. If you’ve been writing “Enclosed please find a statement,” you can cut out a word by saying “Enclosed is a statement.” But if the sentence is “We are glad to report that your uniform went forward Tuesday,” you can’t cut out the word “your” and make the statement read “We are glad to report that uniform went forward Tuesday.” You can, of course, but not without making your letter telegraphic and therefore unnatural.

Bear in mind that your aim is to write natural, friendly letters which *sound* natural and friendly when you read them aloud.

Being telegraphic is just a habit — but one that will hamper your efforts to write interesting letters. It should, therefore, be corrected. Here are some examples taken from actual correspondence which illustrate the point. We are talking now only about being telegraphic, so no mention will be made of stereotyped phrases or other shortcomings in the following sentences:

Acknowledge herewith your reply to our letter
Order will be filled in accordance with your instructions
Regret very much to find
Under the circumstances, would suggest
Upon receipt of this shipment, will have our bookkeeper

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Kindly check over above account

Answering your letter regarding Order 6556X, would say that

Cutting down the cost of correspondence is important but it is certainly false economy to cut on words when cutting decreases the effectiveness or humanness of the letter.

Look on the letter as a flesh-and-blood representative of your firm — and one by which you are unconsciously judged. Every letter you send out makes some kind of impression. If your letters are telegraphic, the men reading them can't help but feel either that you don't care enough about their business to write a decent letter or that you haven't the time to give it the attention it deserves.

On the other hand, if you write naturally, interestingly and at the same time concisely, you have immediately made your customer or prospect prejudiced in your favor.

How you say it is every bit as important as *what* you say. Therefore, write letters — not telegrams.

Topic No. 16. The Danger in Long Sentences

Stay away from long sentences — they're dangerous! They're like barbed-wire entanglements — you get in and before you get out you've cut the clarity of your message to ribbons.

I've seen any quantity of letters that were excellent, except in one respect — the extreme length of some of the sentences.

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This simply makes the letter harder to read and understand and therefore less effective.

It's bad enough when long sentences are written by a man who knows his pronouns and who has the happy faculty of being able to express himself clearly, no matter how long it takes. On the other hand, when one who is not an experienced letter writer attempts the lengthy sentence, the usual result is a confused, unintelligible conglomeration of words — not a clear-cut message at all.

Look at this seventy-eight-word sentence and see if you get a clear idea of what it's all about.

Most buyers, like you and I, like to feel that we are obtaining a high grade product and full value for the money paid and both of us know that advertised products are generally specified and always demanded in preference to ones not so well known because of lack of complete advertising, even though the quality of the product contained in a cheaper and flimsier paper box may be equally as good or better than the advertised product.

Here's another — a seventy-word sentence. See how difficult it is to “get the drift of it.”

Visualize the advertising value for your product on shelves wherever it is sold and displayed through a package that is strong enough to stand up and stack well and properly protect the contents and have lasting advertising value when attractively printed, even though the difference in cost may be a fraction of a penny apiece more per box, the advertising that you get will make it a mighty good investment.

Now read the words that Abraham Lincoln wrote into his farewell address at Springfield (1861) and see how close the periods are.

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My Friends: No one not in my situation can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place and the kindness of these people I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington, . . .

How wonderfully clear cut and concise! How easy to understand! After all, there's no secret about it. Cultivate the habit of breaking up the message into smaller doses — that's all. The following example shows how easy it is to break up long sentences.

Regret very much to find that it will be impossible to make a four-piece suit from the material you selected from our Mr. Jones, due to the fact that there is not quite enough goods left on this particular piece.

I am sorry, but it will be impossible to make a four-piece suit from the material you selected. Unfortunately, there isn't quite enough goods left on this particular piece.

Try it out the next time you dictate. The only thing to keep in mind is: let the sentences follow in logical sequence and read smoothly.

Topic No. 17. About Contractions

Personally, I am heartily in favor of contractions — in their proper place. Many people aren't, and I agree that there are times when the use of contractions is unnecessary and even improper. There are *more* times, however, when intelligent use of a contraction injects into the letter that

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spontaneity and naturalness so necessary to the "friendly feeling" we are striving for.

A really *good* letter, when read aloud, won't sound like a letter at all. If it is naturally written, you will subconsciously visualize the writer delivering that same message in person. You will subconsciously concentrate on the message itself rather than on the way it is expressed.

If that then is our goal — and in my opinion it most certainly is — then anything we can do in our letters to make them less letter-ish and more natural will be a step in the right direction.

How many people go through even one day without using at least some contractions in speaking? Not many — and that's easily verified. On all sides, in every office, on every corner and in every home you hear:

"Hot, isn't it?"

"How's business?"

"Here's a chance to make money."

"That's our trouble, too."

"What's the matter?"

"Aren't you through yet?"

"Doesn't this look great?"

How artificial and affected we'd sound if we talked like this:

"Hot, is it not?"

"Do you not know better?"

"Are you not getting stouter?"

"Does not this look nice?"

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It is my contention, therefore, that letters that don't take advantage of the naturalness of contractions are likewise artificial and affected. Instead of reading smoothly and evenly, you get a series of breaks that emphasize the fact that this is just a cold-blooded, formal message on paper, not a warm, friendly substitute for the personal talk.

Let's talk now about the borderline cases — the instances where it doesn't sound stilted or unnatural not to use the contraction, but where using it strengthens the message.

I should rather start off a letter with "Here's an opportunity to save money" than with "Here is an opportunity to save money." That's a borderline example, of course. It is a strong sentence either way, but it is stronger, I feel, with the contraction.

I should prefer "If you don't receive this shipment in ten days, please let us know" to "If you do not receive this shipment, please let us know."

In the last analysis, letters are judged, not so much by the quality of their grammatical construction, as by the extent to which they make a favorable impression.

It is well to keep in mind that few professors of English can write a productive sales letter and that a strict grammarian seldom makes a good salesman.

Topic No. 18. How Long Should a Letter Be?

This question comes up frequently and there are two answers.

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Generally speaking, a letter should be as long as is necessary to tell the story effectively — no longer and no shorter. Give the message in a clear-cut, straightforward manner, garnish it with a friendly entrance and exit and let that be all.

Specifically speaking, some letters should be long and others short, depending upon the *purpose* of the letter.

If the object is to get orders, the proper telling of the story will, in most cases, necessitate a long letter, for you must create interest, bring about desire and induce action. Study the letters used by all mail-order houses to get orders; you'll find they're all long.

If the object is to answer an inquiry, the same thing applies. Usually a man who asks for information will read nearly anything you send him on the subject, for he has already expressed interest. A short letter, hastily skipping over the points that might well be elaborated, goes just about halfway and is seldom effective. Most firms, when they receive inquiries, are wise enough to give more than the information requested.

The prospect may simply say, "Give me your best price on _____." Or he may ask some such specific question, as, "Can your machine be operated with D. C. current?"

The first question could be answered with a very short letter — one containing nothing but the answer to the question. The second could be answered with one word — "yes" or "no." But what good correspondent would stop there? First

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give the information asked for and then, while you have the prospect's attention, go right on and give some pertinent facts about quality, value, service, policy, etc.

If the object is to solicit an inquiry, I am in favor of telling only enough to make the prospect want to hear more. In some cases, that might mean one short paragraph, like this:

I have just had patented a new floor-polishing machine that will save your firm five to ten thousand dollars a year. Who — in your organization — is the right man to hear the details?

It might be that three or four paragraphs, or even two pages, would be necessary in order to create enough interest to make the prospect want to hear more. Don't shoot all your ammunition at once. Tell enough — but not too much.

If the object is to collect money, the tendency should be toward comparatively short letters — three or four paragraphs at the most. In the majority of instances, you can get your idea across in less space than that and still conform to all the rules for collection-letter writing. In a general way, you can assume that no man wants to wade through a long letter, the purpose of which is to separate him from part of his bank account.

If the object is to adjust a complaint, don't go out of your way to write a short letter. Explain fully just how you feel about it. Don't let your customer think that you get so many complaints that you can't take time to answer his courteously and

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completely; that merely fans the flame. Most well-written answers to complaints are one or more full pages in length.

Be guided by what the letter is supposed to do. Think about it first — then act accordingly.

Topic No. 19. Your Stenographer

Is she a machine or a helper? Does she transcribe word for word what you dictate — or has she the liberty to make suggestions as they occur to her?

If you would have perfect letters, tell your stenographer that she may feel free to criticize constructively your language or “tone” or policy any time she sees fit.

Tell her that it is part of her responsibility to see that the letters going out of your office are *right* — not only with regard to physical appearance and mechanical make-up but with regard to *text* as well. Train her to look at your letters out of the eyes of the men who are going to receive them; this will give you an outsider’s reaction. Train her not only to *take* your dictation but to *judge* it too.

Most girls will not do that unless you tell them. They’re quite naturally afraid that “you wouldn’t like it.” They’ll go on year in and year out being just machines — doing as they’re told (most of the time), pounding away on their typewriters with minds probably on the date next Saturday night.

On the other hand, let your stenographer feel that she’s more than an automaton, more than

just the means by which letters get typed — and notice the difference in her whole general attitude. She'll realize then that on *her* falls some of the responsibility for the good will and future business of the firm.

I've seen instances where a mistake in a letter caught by a stenographer has saved a company thousands of dollars. I've seen dozens of cases where a suggested rewording by a stenographer has meant the retaining of a customer who otherwise might have been lost.

The *important* point is that stenographers generally will not do that; they will not take any initiative unless they are made to feel that it would be welcome.

It might be a good idea to let every stenographer in your office know exactly how you feel in regard to this and other qualifications so that she can more intelligently work for promotion. Make up a typewritten list of the attributes that in your estimation constitute the ideal stenographer. Give her a mark to shoot at!

Here are some suggestions:

Neatness and accuracy in transcribing.

Speed and promptness in dispatching work.

Proofreading letters before returning for signature.

Care in spelling, punctuation and general construction.

Artistic appearance of letter on the page.

Initiative in suggesting improvements in the wording of letters.

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Ability to detect errors in dictation.

Pleasant and even disposition.

Courtesy in answering the telephone.

A willingness to do the things asked of her.

A disposition to work overtime cheerfully if it becomes necessary.

A freshness of manner indicative of sufficient rest and sleep.

A personality that radiates cheer and optimism.

Such is the *ideal* stenographer. Hard to find? Right! But if she can't be ideal, she can at least know what ideal means and come as close to it as possible. Tell her the things you'd like her to be and you'll be surprised how many unsuspected qualities she'll develop.

Topic No. 20. The Form-letter System

How much, in the course of a week, do you repeat yourself in dictation? There are so many times in business correspondence when one letter applies equally well to a number of cases that the need for some system of form letters becomes apparent.

Often, too, form letters are used when they should *not* be used; therefore we shall attempt to cover both sides of the story.

There are certain routine situations — such as answering some kinds of inquiries, adjusting some kinds of complaints and following up some kinds of prospects — in which “form” letters will answer the purpose just as well and in many cases more effectively than dictated letters. There are certainly

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enough instances like that in the majority of offices to warrant a "form-letter system."

On the other hand, a form letter should never be used unless it *completely* covers the particular situation. If it doesn't seem to "fit," even in the slightest detail, an individually dictated letter, possibly written with the form letter as a model, would be infinitely better. It is false economy to *make* a letter fit when it actually doesn't.

Now let's get straight on the real meaning of the word "form" as used in connection with letters. This discussion has nothing to do with the so-called form *sales* letters, but applies only to routine correspondence. A form letter is simply any letter, either dictated hastily or painstakingly prepared, that is sent to a "list" instead of to just one individual. The right kind of form letter will not *look* like a form letter at all. It will be individually typed and hand signed and will have exactly the appearance of a personally dictated letter.

The effect is entirely killed when the letter *looks* "form-letter-ish." The way to avoid that is to dictate, or preferably to write out in longhand, a friendly, convincing, interesting and complete letter to cover the particular need you have in mind. Then have it typewritten. Go over it again; analyze it to see if it meets the requirements; blue-pencil it; work on it until you feel that, as a *personal* letter, it "fills the bill." Then use it as a "form" letter every time it fits.

Following is one letter in a form-letter system written to cover cancellations for a large Atlantic

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City hotel. I think you'll agree that it doesn't read like a form letter.

Thank you for your letter of . . . telling of your inability to visit the Strand on . . . as you had planned.

We are cancelling your reservation with the hope that we may, in the very near future, have the pleasure of entertaining you.

Whether you come next week or next month, you can be sure of a very cordial welcome and every effort on our part to make you comfortable.

If you have a system in use now, why not go over each letter with these thoughts in mind? Decide whether the stranger receiving it will think it is a personally dictated letter or of the "canned" variety. If it resembles the latter, then try again.

If you use no form letters at all, why not make an analysis of one week's carbons and see how many times the same subject is covered — how many times you're duplicating your efforts and those of your stenographers by unnecessarily saying the same thing over and over again.

The *lack* of an efficient form-letter system can prove just as expensive as the improper use of one.

Topic No. 21. Mechanical Qualities

We come now to a summing up, divided for the purpose of easier digestion into two parts. In this section is discussed the checking up on those specific parts of your letter that might be called mechanical qualities. The next and last discussion will take care of the so-called psychological qualities.

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Mechanical qualities are things you can “put your hands on.” They’re the visible qualities. You can look at the letter after it’s typed and immediately pick out the mechanical shortcomings, if any exist, and correct them.

I don’t mean entirely physical appearance, although that is of course important. It is obvious that your letters should be neatly typed and invitingly set up on the page. The margins should be even and sufficiently large to avoid that crowded look. Spelling and punctuation should be correct in every detail. Your signature should be readable. All in all, the letter should be as interesting looking as you can make it.

But you can *see* more in a letter than just the physical appearance.

Have you stopped using all stereotyped and worn-out words and phrases? Does the opening sentence do more than just acknowledge? Is your letter sharp and concise and to the point — or rambling and wordy? Is your answer, if it is an answer, complete? Does it cover the subject fully — or only partially?

Are the various thoughts and paragraphs related and does the letter read smoothly — or do you flit around from one argument to another and hope the message will be understood? Are there any great long sentences that require a new breath in the middle? Are the paragraphs short and easy to read? Have you been careful in the use of superlatives and adjectives? Are the pronouns well chosen? Is your letter free from vague terms?

You see, letter writing is somewhat like golf — there are a lot of things to remember. The advantage that we have in letter writing, however, is that we can go over our work *after* it's done — analyze it, actually see it and size it up. In golf . . . well, we won't go into that.

Get into the habit, when letters are brought to you for signing, of mentally tearing them to pieces. Look at them not only from the standpoint of how well your stenographer did her job, but also from the standpoint of how well you did yours.

Make a testing chart for letters and, no matter how good the letters you write now, you'll soon see a very tangible improvement.

Topic No. 22. Psychological Qualities

There is something about a letter that you *feel* rather than see. That's the psychological part.

You read a letter from a firm that is soliciting your business and somehow get a negative reaction. There's nothing about the letter that you can honestly object to and there's nothing at all that you can lay your hands on — still there's *something* that didn't quite "set" the right way.

You read another letter from a competing firm and for some reason you are receptive from the start. That letter has the right tone — it is written with the deliberate idea of making friends.

It is pretty generally conceded that a salesman — before he can sell a product — must sell himself. He either is liked and creates confidence in himself

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and therefore sells — or he doesn't. If he doesn't sell, it often is because he hasn't made friends.

Letters are that way, too. Regular, routine, everyday letters that aren't sent out particularly to sell goods can, by their very tone, affect the feeling toward your firm to such an extent that you see it in the sales volume.

In what way will your letter change your reader's regard for your firm? That's the thing to consider. Will it make him more friendly or less friendly, or will the status remain the same?

You don't want to stop at just having your letter do its job. *Make it do more than that!* If you're trying to collect money, get the money, but retain his friendship at the same time.

If the purpose in writing is to acknowledge an order, make your letter more than a bare acknowledgment.

If your object is to admit an error and apologize, do it wholeheartedly and sincerely — not begrudgingly.

Let there be one big thought in back of every letter you write, no matter what its mission — to create in the mind of your reader the idea that yours is a fine, friendly house with whom to do business.

Make them *like* you! That's the secret. Friendliness in a letter is its most precious ingredient, and the more you use it, the more effective your letters will be.

Make every letter a sales letter regardless of its purpose — and you are worth more to your firm than its most successful salesman.

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